INDIANA ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SCHOOLS: EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF LEZOTTE'S CORRELATES OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS AND THE INDIANA A-F GRADING SYSTEM

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

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DR. LORI BOYLAND - ADVISOR

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

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MAY 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thank you to Dr. Lori Boyland who was gracious enough to make time in her busy schedule to accept me as another doctoral candidate when my prior doctoral chair retired. She provided guidance, support, and great feedback that allowed me to finish this dissertation. Thank you to Dr. Marilynn Quick, Dr. David Pearson, and Dr. Kendra Lowery for your willingness to sit on my committee and for your guidance through this study. Thank you to Dr. Kianre Eouanzoui for guiding me through the difficult task of analyzing my data. Thank you to those individuals in my doctoral cohort for your friendship and support while finishing coursework, testing, and writing the dissertation. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Shelli, for her support, love, and endless patience through this challenging, but rewarding, experience.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, father, mother, brother, and to the many educators who offered me their expertise and support. You have shaped my perceptions about what is important in life and how to handle life's challenges. This dissertation is also dedicated to those individuals who have survived cancer and to those who fought cancer to their last day. As a cancer survivor, I can say that one great strategy to defeat cancer is finding another challenge, like completing an advanced degree, that offers a distraction and something positive to focus on.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Known as a "Dropout Nation," the United States is seeking ways to encourage students to stay in high school and reinvest in their education (Schlessman & Hurtado, 2012). The 2015 graduation rate for students in the United States was 81.4% (DePaoli, Fox, Ingram, Maushard, Bridgeland, & Balfanz, 2016). The enrollment for public education students in the fall of 2014 was 50 million students (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]), 2015). A simple calculation using these two data points captures the graduation failure rate in the United States: With an average number of four million students per grade level, considering the spring 2015 graduation rate of 81.5%, means that approximately 740,000 seniors nationwide did not graduate at the close of just one academic year. According to Smink and Reimer (2005), the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network viewed alternative education as one effective strategy to re-engage students who did not graduate or who research showed were at-risk of dropping out.

In Indiana, the 2015 graduation rate was higher than the national average, calculated at 88.9% (Indiana Department of Education [IDOE], 2015a). In the fall of 2014, there were 1,046,026 students who attended public schools in Indiana. Of those students, 76,101 were in Grades 12 or 12+. The scope of the graduation failure rate in Indiana is also captured in simple calculations: With approximately 76,101 students enrolled in the 12th grade and considering the 2015 graduation rate, approximately 8,447 Indiana seniors failed to graduate in 2014-2015. Even though Indiana students are graduating at a slightly higher rate than the national average, there are still thousands of Indiana students for whom graduation from high school is thwarted by overwhelming challenges.

Legislation in Indiana defines five specific behaviors for at-risk students who are enrolled in grades six through twelve and are in danger of not graduating or dropping out. These students

may be assigned or choose to attend an Indiana alternative education program or school (Indiana State Legislature, 2005). The five at-risk behaviors are:

1. The student intends to withdraw or has withdrawn from school before graduation.
2. The student has been identified as a student who has failed to comply academically or would benefit from instruction offered in a manner different from the manner of instruction available in traditional school.
3. The student is a parent or expectant parent and is unable to regularly attend the traditional school program.
4. The student is employed, and the employment is necessary for the support of the student or the student's immediate family and interferes with part of the student's instructional day.
5. The student is a disruptive student (Indiana State Legislature, 2005).

Between 2011 and 2014, Indiana public schools averaged just over one million students per year with a steady graduation rate of 87% to 89%. This calculates to approximately 8,400 students per year in each Grade 6 through Grade 12 who are either not graduating or are not making adequate progress towards graduation (IDOE, 2014, 2015a). Multiplying the 8,400 students per grade by seven, or the number of grades 6 through 12, reveals that roughly 58,800 Indiana students are falling behind in traditional schools during any given academic year and likely not to graduate on time. The tens of thousands of Indiana students falling behind academically deserve quality alternative education program or school choices to re-engage and reinvest in their education.

A comprehensive national study of state-level legislation and policy showed that 94% of states have some form of alternative education legislation or policy (Lehr, Tan, & Ysseldyke,

2009). The same study showed a great variance, however, regarding the specific alternative education barriers addressed such as: behavior problems, history of poor attendance, suspension or expulsion, and social or emotional problems. In a *Jobs for the Future* report, feedback was offered to policymakers on ways to strengthen legislation on alternative education (Almeida, Le, Steinberg, & Cervantes, 2010a). Strengthening accountability for results was one significant insight.

Despite the recommendation about the value of strong accountability standards in alternative education, the reality is that inconsistent attention is paid to accountability (Schlessman & Hurtado, 2012). Effective accountability metrics are supposed to hold students to high standards (Almeida, Steinberg, Santos, & Le, 2010b), but there are some states where policy does not sufficiently address accountability (Schlessman & Hurtado, 2012). In several states, policy outcomes provided overly rigid accountability, leaving alternative schools without the necessary flexibility to make highly specialized missions possible (Almeida et al., 2010b). In other states, policy outcomes ignored effective accountability standards and the alternative schools failed to set appropriate student expectations.

Effective schools begin with accountability policies that provide formative feedback, de-emphasize standardization, and provide for individuality in students (Cobb, 2004). Research reveals that there are six dimensions of an accountability model that make an important difference in facilitating school effectiveness and school improvement (Cobb, 2004). These six dimensions of a quality accountability model are: definition of performance, assessment of performance, goal orientation, evaluative function, consequential nature, and locus of control. Scholars suggest that state legislators need to examine the effectiveness of alternative education by studying the impact of accountability models (Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006). Currently, many

states, including Indiana, use one state assessment framework to make these important assessment decisions about schools and students (Cobb, 2004). In Indiana, the A-F Grading System has been incorporated across the board with no regard to the unique circumstances of alternative programs or schools, and with little evidence to support the grading system's effectiveness.

Problem Statement

All public schools in Indiana, including alternative education programs and schools, are required to track student proficiency and growth data using information about high school graduation rate and using information about passing rates on the annual state assessment (ISTEP+) (Indiana State Board of Education [ISBOE], 2015). The dilemma embedded in this accountability framework is revealed in that the state defines alternative education programs and alternative education schools differently from traditional schools and differently from one another. The differing definitions for traditional public school, alternative education programs, and alternative education schools necessitates the creation of an accountability model that accurately assesses the quality of each individual model.

Alternative education programs in Indiana are "schools within a school" (IDOE, 2017). They operate using the same state-assigned school number as the middle or high school that created the program. As a result, all performance data of students attending the alternative education program are reported to the state along with the data of the balance of the student body. Alternative education schools in Indiana differ from alternative education programs in that they have a separate school number and are eligible to award a diploma (IDOE, 2017). The data collected from alternative schools is reported as stand-alone data for the alternative education school and cannot be hidden by being included within a larger group. It is important to

understand the difference between a traditional public school, an alternative program, and an alternative school because the definition impacts the specific assessment challenge each faces.

Indiana's A-F Grading System has been challenged as having serious flaws (Cobb, 2004; Grew & Sheldrake, 2013; Johns, personal communication, March 2, 2016). When applied to Indiana schools, the A-F Grading System has been deemed ineffective by many due to issues such as overreliance on high-stakes assessments and inconsistencies in processes and outcomes. These challenges have resulted in lack of support for the A-F System from some politicians and many educators, parents, and students (Grew & Sheldrake, 2013). The challenges to the A-F Grading System will be discussed further in the chapter two literature review.

The A-F Grading System may be especially problematic when applied to Indiana alternative education programs and schools. According to Ms. Julia Johns, Indiana Department of Education Alternative/Literacy Specialist, the A-F Grading System is not an appropriate accountability tool because it does not take into consideration any special circumstance that caused the student to not be able to perform in their traditional school (personal communication, March 2, 2016). The A-F Grading System does not collect data specific to the performance of Indiana alternative education programs. Instead, alternative program data is reported along with all other student data of the middle or high school that created the program (IDOE, 2017).

In other words, Indiana's A-F Grading System, when applied to alternative education schools as a one-size-fits-all model, does not account for the highly-specialized mission of the alternative setting (Cobb, 2004; Johns, personal communication, March 2, 2016). Because of the challenges of the A-F Grading Systems in general, and its inability to account for the special circumstances of alternative schools and programs (as noted by Johns at the IDOE), the A-F Grading System may not be the appropriate system to assess Indiana alternative education

schools. In other states, successful alternative education programs and schools exist, in part because of appropriate assessment frameworks that specifically target data for alternative education programs or schools (Almeida, Le, Steinberg, & Cervantes, 2010a).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of educators in Indiana's alternative education programs and schools regarding school effectiveness using Lezotte's (2011) seven Correlates of Effective Schools. Comparisons of school settings, participants' demographics and perceptions of accountability measures will be conducted. This study will also gather educators' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of using the Indiana A-F Grading System in assessing alternative education programs and schools.

Significance of the Study

This study will provide additional research to the challenges faced by Indiana's A-F Grading System when it is applied to public schools. In addition, this study will provide data on the perceptions of Indiana educators regarding the effectiveness of the Indiana A-F Grading System on alternative education programs and schools. Currently, there is a gap in research in this specific area. Finally, this study will provide data on the perceptions of Indiana's alternative educators regarding the effectiveness of using Lezotte's (2011) seven correlates of Effective schools as an evaluative model, which might generate implications or recommendations regarding potential options for assessment of alternative programs and schools. In sum, the information gathered in this study will contribute to the extremely limited body of knowledge regarding appropriate and effective assessment of Indiana's alternative education programs and schools.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of educators in Indiana's alternative education programs and schools regarding school effectiveness using Lezotte's (2011) seven Correlates of Effective Schools and Indiana's A-F Grading System. Lezotte's seven correlates are: (a) safe and orderly environment; (b) climate of high expectations for success; (c) strong instructional leadership; (d) clear and focus mission; (e) opportunity to learn and student time on task; (f) frequent monitoring of student progress; (g) home-school relations (2009).

There are four research questions that will guide my inquiry:

1. Which of Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools do participants report as evident in Indiana alternative education programs and schools?
2. What similarities or differences exist between the perceptions of participants in different alternative settings (alternative education programs or alternative education schools) regarding the use of the A-F Grading System and Lezotte's correlates?
3. What similarities or differences exist between the perceptions of participants with different demographics (grade level, position, community size, program type, percentage of students on free/reduced meals) regarding the use of the A-F Grading System and Lezotte's correlates?
4. What are perceptions of participants regarding Lezotte's correlates and the Indiana A-F Grading System as measures of accountability for alternative programs or schools?

Conceptual Framework

Indiana's alternative education programs and schools are working to provide an alternate pathway to academic success for students who struggle with barriers to successful completion of

their 6-12 schooling experience. It is important to provide alternative education students with options that differ from the traditional education model to facilitate their academic progress through to high school graduation (Almeida et al., 2010b; Katsiyannis & Williams, 1999; Lehr et al., 2009; Pharo, 2012; Schlessman & Hurtado, 2012). There is not a one best pathway to developing a high performing alternative education program or school that is right for all students. An alternative program or school cannot adopt one curriculum or set of school policies that will serve as a one-size-fits-all approach (Chenoweth, 2007). This research suggests that the chosen accountability tool, like the Correlates of Effective Schools, must embed flexibility to accommodate for several types of school missions.

Dr. Lawrence W. Lezotte, Ph.D. is a national education consultant and the Chief Executive Officer of Effective Schools Products, Ltd. His exhaustively-researched Correlates of Effective Schools create a framework for quantifying specific education characteristics of high performing schools (2011), and creates a pathway for student success (Downer, 1989, 1991; Fullan, 1982, 1985 ; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston, & Smith, 1979). The correlates include: (a) safe and orderly environment; (b) climate of high expectations for success; (c) strong instructional leadership; (d) clear and focus mission; (e) opportunity to learn and student time on task; (f) frequent monitoring of student progress; (g) home-school relations (Lezotte, 2009). Lezotte's research and seven Correlates of Effective Schools (2011) provide for the conceptual framework for this study. The seven correlates have already been developed into a widely-used assessment instrument with a large bank of questions appropriate for any school setting. These questions, which have been previously field-tested and deemed to have high validity and reliability, will be employed for this study.

Delimitations

This study is limited to the 189 programs identified as alternative education programs or schools in the Indiana code. Only administrators supervising in the alternative programs and the teachers working in the alternative programs are invited to complete the survey. To limit the scope of the survey, district level administrators were not invited to participate. Finally, Indiana is the focus of this study so the results cannot be generalized to the United States.

Definitions

- *Alternative Education Programs (AEP).* In this legislation, the state legislature defined an alternative program, defined an alternative student, and identified policy guidelines for acceptance as a state recognized alternative education program (IC 20-30-8).
- *Alternative Education Program Grant*. Renewed annually, this grant allows an approved school corporation or charter schools to receive up to $750 per student in additional funding in a matching grant (IC 20-20-33-1).
- *At-risk Students*. An at-risk student is a student attending a public school, or who has withdrawn or been expelled, who meets a state's definition of a student who is less likely to perform in school, academically, socially, or behaviorally, and graduate high school.
- *Community Size*. For the purposes of this study, community size is defined as: 10,000 or less; 10,001-25,000; and over 25,000.
- *Community Type*. Community type is defined using three classifications: rural (up to 4,999), small urban or suburban (5,000-49,999), and Urban (over 50,000) (Indiana Department of Transportation, n.d.).
- *Effective Schools*. This term is used to mean two separate things in this research study. First, it refers to any school offering a high-quality education when compared to local,

state and/or federal regulations. Second, it refers to the Effective Schools Institute owned and operated by the national educational researcher, Dr. Larry Lezotte.

- *Free or Reduced Meals*. Families with children who meet federal income guidelines are eligible for reduced priced or free meals through their local public schools. The guidelines are intended to directly benefit children who are most in need (United States Department of Agriculture, 2016).
- *Grade Level.* For the purposes of this study, grade level refers to alternative student enrolled in middle school (grades 6-8), high school (grades 9-12), or both (grades 6-12).
- *Indiana's A-F Grading System*. In 1999, the General Assembly passed Public Law 221-1999, which created a performance-based accountability system. In 2011, the State Board adopted a new rule that overhauled the accountability system under PL221. The new state accountability system is known as the A-F Grading System. The A-F Grading has undergone multiple revisions since it was originally passed but currently stands as the state's lone accountability system for all public schools.
- *Position.* For the purposes of this study, position refers to administrators who supervise or teachers who educate in Indiana alternative education programs and schools.
- *Stand-alone Alternative Education Program*. These are alternative education programs located in Indiana that have their individually state-assigned school number. If the alternative education program does not have their individually assigned school number all student information and data is considered part of the sending school.
- *Traditional Public School*. A traditional public school is defined as a school in the United States that is not a charter school, voucher school, or other school funded by public tax dollars.

Summary

This study will investigate the perceptions of Indiana educators regarding the effectiveness of the A-F Grading System and Lezotte's (2011) seven Correlates of Effective Schools in Indiana alternative education programs and schools. Indiana's alternative education policy has established program expectations, defined an alternative education student, and established a grant to offer additional financial resources (Indiana State Legislature, 2005, 2006). The A-F Grading System, however, serves as an inflexible one-size-fits-all approach to school accountability that may not sufficiently account for the definitions or the highly-specialized missions of Indiana alternative education programs and schools (Cobb, 2004; Johns, personal communication, March 2, 2016).

The data from this study could show that there is a potential choice, other than the A-F Grading System, for an effective accountability metric that may provide meaningful feedback on the Indiana alternative education programs and schools. If the results do not support the use of Lezotte's (2011) accountability model as an effective choice, the study may still provide meaningful feedback. The results of this study will provide current data documenting educators' assessments of Indiana's alternative programs and schools based on Lezotte's model. The results could indicate that educators believe that Lezotte's model is a potential choice, other than the A-F Grading System, for an effective accountability metric that may provide meaningful feedback on the Indiana alternative education programs and schools. If the results do not support the use of Lezotte's (2011) accountability model as an effective choice, the results will still provide meaningful feedback as they may reveal that Indiana's alternative educators feel the current A-F Grading System is effective. In either case, this study's results may help clarify parameters for choosing accountability models that are effective in assessing Indiana alternative education

programs and schools. In addition, this study will add alternative educators' voices to the discussion on appropriate assessment models for their schools.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter two begins with a brief history of alternative education in the United States from 1960 to the present. The review continues with an overview of federal and state reform that focuses on high profile education policy such as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This chapter also contains a review of attempts by several states, including Indiana, to successfully define, design, and implement alternative education programs and schools. There will be a comparison of research on successful school characteristics among traditional and alternative programs, Indiana's expectations established in the A-F Grading System for alternative education programs and schools, and Lezotte's (2011) seven Correlates of Effective Schools. The final section of this chapter is a review of Lezotte's (2011) seven Correlates of Effective Schools to organize information and to provide a platform for research.

History of Alternative Education

Alternative education programs and schools across the United States began developing in the 1960s (Katsiyannis & Williams, 1999). This social movement known as the "free schools' movement," offered at-risk students educational options and led to thousands of schools opening largely in urban areas. Alternative education programs and schools were often funded by tuition or grant programs. The goal was to offer students an education that was not supervised by government agencies (Graubard, 1972).

Alternative education programs grew significantly in the mid-1970s. In 1973, there were 464 alternative educational programs, but by 1975, that number had grown to 5,000 (Katsiyannis & Williams, 1999). By 1998, 22 states reported passage of legislation that addressed alternative education policy. In all 22 states, the legislation included two components: 1) A state definition

of alternative education and, 2) an expectation of how to identify who would be eligible to receive services within the context of that definition (Katsiyannis & Williams, 1999).

California was the first state to write policy that allowed students to opt out of their traditional public schools (Schlessman & Hurtado, 2012). A 1976 California policy allowed students options outside the traditional school model as a pathway to graduation (Schlessman & Hurtado, 2012). Since that 1976 California policy dedicated to the needs of a specific, identified, cohort of students, several other state legislatures have taken on the challenge of writing policies and accountability frameworks for a variety of alternative education programs and schools. The lack of intentionality among state legislatures to write a uniform policy on alternative education, however, has resulted in diversity in the development, content, and effectiveness of alternative education programs and schools (Schlessman & Hurtado, 2012).

The chaotic origins and growth of the alternative education movement and the lack of a uniform approach to writing policy for alternative education are indicated in the research on alternative education. In one meta-analysis study, the researchers attempted to identify the current state of alternative education programs and schools by researching how all fifty states and the District of Columbia defined alternative education (Porowski, O'Conner, & Luo, 2014). In doing so, the authors were trying to provide some organized approach of researching data about how individual states defined and implemented alternative education. The results from this study demonstrated an inconsistent policy approach to defining alternative education programs and schools.

The meta-analysis conduced by Porowski, O'Conner and Luo compared information regarding how each state defined students who were eligible for alternative programs and schools by grade or age, and the research examined which behavioral categories made students

eligible for enrollment in an alternative program or school (2014, pp. 5-7). The data offered represented a breakdown by the grade or age and the specific at-risk category of the student served in an alternative program or school. The corresponding number shown in parentheses represent the number of states in the United States that have written into policy the grade, age or at-risk category. The breakdown for grade or age was: elementary school (13), middle school (22), high school (23), and by age (5). The breakdown for behavioral categories was: student behavioral problems (35), student with academic problems (18), at-risk students (18), students who are unable to benefit from regular school (13), drop outs (11), and students with attendance or truancy (9). It is important to note in this research that definitions of alternative education programs and schools' characteristics for grade or age and eligibility criteria vary from state-to-state (Porowski et al., 2014).

Another study researched grade or age ranges of alternative settings and behavioral characteristics for enrollment in alternative education programs and schools. This study went one step further, however, by defining the key attributes of alternative education programs (Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006). According to the authors, the key attributes of alternative programs included a clear focus on academic learning combined with engaging and creative instruction for all students, a culture of high expectations, on-going professional development for instructors, and low student-teacher ratios in classrooms with strong positive relationships.

The current lack of consistent policy development on grade or age of alternative education participants, eligibility criteria, and program characteristics may lead to ineffective accountability metrics and may also create scenarios promoting failure of alternative programs and schools (Almeida et al., 2010b). However, researcher report that it is possible to author

effective accountability metrics if there is a focus on the common themes of alternative program and school characteristics, such as:

- Students are typically middle and/or high school aged.
- School missions are targeted to specialized populations.
- Established accountability metrics contain some common elements.
- Flexible working environment with an emphasis on positive relationships.
- Established wrap-around services for students (Almeida et al., 2010a; Almeida et al., 2010b; Pharo, 2012).

In summary, if there were more uniformity in alternative education policy development and if accountability metrics focused on the common characteristics present in alternative programs and schools, an effective accountability metric may be identified or developed.

Federal Legislation and Policy

The history of alternative education in the United States began in the 1960s (Katsiyannis & Williams, 1999). The historical review of policy and accountability development among the states regarding alternative education shows a lack of uniformity (Porowski et al., 2014; Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006). The increasing demand for alternative education, however, is emphasized in a 1999 study in which there were 38 states that participated in a survey regarding alternative education programs and schools. In that survey, 37 of 38 states reported the need for alternative programming (Katsiyannis & Williams, 1999). The same survey defined alternative education as, "An education program that embraces subject matter and/or teacher methodology that is not generally offered to students of the same age or grade level in traditional school settings, which offers a range of educational options and includes the students as an integral part of the planning team" (New Jersey Department of Education as cited in Katsiyannis & Williams, 1999, p. 276).

The feedback from the survey by Katsiyannis and Williams emphasized the need for alternative programming (1999). Considering the lack of uniformity of state development of alternative education policy and accountability metrics and the increasing demand for alternative programming, raises questions regarding the history of federal involvement in supporting alternative education.

In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed and became Public Law 89-10 (United States Department of Education [USDOE], n.d.). This law addressed education inequality and was the beginning of federal legislation impacting K-12 public education. Since 1965, the ESEA has been amended several times and the details of the original ESEA have changed dramatically. In 1966, amendments were added to the ESEA to establish the first federal grant program addressing students with disabilities and created two agencies—the Bureau for Education of the Handicapped and the National Council on Disability (USDOE, n.d.). Over the next 50 years this piece of legislation has continued to be the vehicle that the federal government has used to gain access to and impact K-12 public education. Most recently, ESEA was reauthorized during the Obama administration in 2010 (USDOE, n.d.).

President Obama also created the Race to the Top Program (RttT) that targeted and financially supported creative and promising ideas to improve education ("K-12 reforms: Strategic initiatives to foster real change", n.d.). The goal of this program was for states to raise education standards and student achievement across the nation (Achieve, 2009). According to the U.S. Secretary of Education at the time, Arne Duncan, the Race to the Top Program was designed to target four program areas:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in a global economy,

- Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction,
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers, principals, especially where they are needed most, and
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools (USDOE, 2009)

In addition to landmark federal education legislation like ESEA and RttP, there have been several other pieces of federal education legislation passed during the past 50 years that have significantly impacted public education. The Bilingual Education Act of 1967, the Education for all Handicapped Children of 1975, the Education and Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981, the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994, and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 are all examples of increasing federal influence, often tied to federal funding, on public education (USDOE, n.d.).

In 2009, the National Alternative Education Association (NAEA) encouraged President Obama to adopt federal policies focused on recovering dropouts and creating productive students. The federal response in 2009 was to leave the details regarding alternative education policy development and academic accountability primarily to the individual state legislatures (NAEA, 2009). The next year, President Obama sought reauthorization for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) but continued to leave alternative education off the list of targeted objectives (USDOE, 2010). In the ESEA reauthorization "blueprint" (USDOE, 2010), President Obama continued to emphasize critical learning objective such as: Improving teacher and principal effectiveness, providing help to families to evaluate their child's school, implementing career technical education, and improving achievement in America's lowest performing schools.

Finally, on December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law. During this signing the President stated, "With this bill, we reaffirm that fundamentally American idea-that every child, regardless of race, income, background, the zip code where they live, deserves the chance to make of their lives what they will" (USDOE, 2015, p. 1). With the passage of this law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was also reauthorized. According to the USDOE the priorities for the ESSA were:

- College and career ready standards
- Annual statewide assessment so all students can learn
- Innovative local assessment pilot
- Student performance targets and school ratings
- Accountability, intervention, and supports for struggling schools
- Teacher and leader evaluation and support systems including student learning and observations
- Competitive program to evaluate and reward effective educators in high need Schools
- Includes pre-k
- Competitive program to replicate high quality charter schools
- Competitive program to encourage wrap-around support Systems for vulnerable communities (USDOE, 2015, p. 1)

As can been seen, there was no direct priority or involvement from the federal government to support writing common alternative education policy or accountability metrics. Federal legislation best aligns with alternative education when it targets subgroups such as impoverished, English language learners, or special education students. These federally-aligned subgroups may coincidentally align with state policy for the identification of at-risk students. Or,

the reasons a student is in a subgroup may act as a catalyst that promotes other at-risk behavior from students that may align with state policy for the identification of at-risk students. Regardless, alternative education is being used as a nationwide response for dealing with at-risk students. Therefore, the lack of direct language related to alternative education may have been a missed opportunity because the federal government would have been one likely starting point towards the development of common and high quality alternative education policy and effective accountability frameworks.

State Legislation and Policy

As the focus of alternative education research narrows from the federal to the state perspective, it is important to remember the growing demand for alternative programming reported on earlier in chapter two (Katsiyannis & Williams, 1999). Currenlty, most of the literature focuses on state-level policy efforts to define and implement high quality alternative education programs and schools (Almeida et al., 2010a; Almeida et al., 2010b). The lack of attention to alternative education noted in federal legislation suggests that states are primarily responsible for alternative education policy and accountability development. There are a growing number of students who are not successful in traditional education (Lehr et al., 2009). Several reports emphasize the need to align alternative education programs and schools to high quality standards and effective accountability frameworks to improve the odds that these students can graduate (Almeida et al., 2010a; Almeida et al., 2010b; Deye, 2011; Reimer & Cash, 2003).

There is evidence that some states are attempting to align alternative education policy and accountability (Schlessman & Hurtado, 2012). These states are going beyond tying student success to standardized achievement tests (Rothstein & Jacobsen, 2006). These states are

moving towards aligned accountability for alternative education programs and schools to educational goals that are appropriate for dropout and at-risk students.

In Colorado, state statute requires alternative education programs and schools to demonstrate progress on key indicators such as: achievement, growth, postsecondary and workforce readiness, and student engagement. In Texas, state statute requires alternative education programs and schools to demonstrate proficiency on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and show progress with English language learning (ELL) students, completion rates, and dropout rates (Schlessman & Hurtado, 2012).

Finally, the Maryland State Department of Education requested that the Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic conduct research on the number of states that have alternative education program and school definitions and the variations in the definitions and programming. Several findings emerged from this study that include:

- Forty-three states and the District of Columbia have formal definitions of alternative education.
- Most alternative education definitions include these four components: target population, setting, services, and structure.
- Most services include the following: regular academic instruction, counseling, social/life skills, job readiness, and behavioral services.
- In the states where operational alternative education programs and schools exist, 18 allow alternative education programs and schools to exist in another program or school and 12 indicate that alternative education programs and schools may be held within the school. (Porowski et al., 2014)

Although there are some states, like Colorado, Texas, and Maryland that are doing a better job of aligning state alternative education policy and accountability and completing necessary alternative education research, most states continue to struggle (Cobb, 2004; Schlessman & Hurtado, 2012). Because Indiana is the focus of this study, a more in-depth review of the state's alternative education policy and accountability is needed.

Indiana

Indiana legislators have embraced the idea that there is a need for alternative programming for many Indiana students. There is some comparison between the passage of Indiana alternative education policy to alternative education legislation passed in states like Colorado, Texas, and Maryland that were just highlighted. To accommodate students in Indiana that demonstrate at-risk behavior, the Indiana State Legislature passed the Alternative Program for Certain Students (IC 20-30-8). Legislation in Indiana defines five specific behaviors for at-risk students who are enrolled in grades six through twelve and are in danger of not graduating or dropping out. These students may be assigned or choose to attend an Indiana alternative education program or school. The five at-risk behaviors are:

1. The student intends to withdraw or has withdrawn from school before graduation.
2. The student has been identified as a student who has failed to comply academically or would benefit from instruction offered in a manner different from the manner of instruction available in traditional school.
3. The student is a parent or expectant parent and is unable to regularly attend the traditional school program.

4. The student is employed, and the employment is necessary for the support of the student or the student's immediate family and interferes with part of the student's instructional day.
5. The student is a disruptive student (Indiana State Legislature, 2005).

The passage of similar alternative education policy is where the similarity ends between Indiana and other high performing states. Since 2011, Indiana legislators have chosen to require use of the A-F Grading System as the state's only metric for assessing the effectiveness of alternative education programs and schools (ISBOE, 2015). Therefore, when it comes to the evaluation of educational programs, Indiana state policymakers have implemented a one-size-fits-all A-F accountability framework to measure the proficiency and growth of all public education students (ISBOE, 2015). This accountability framework has not been able to gain the support of politicians, educators, parents and students due to inconsistencies in processes and outcomes (Grew & Sheldrake, 2013). In 2012, the Indiana State Legislature created the first iteration of the A-F grading system within Public Law 221 (IDOE, 2015b).

The original 2011-2012 version of the A-F Grading System focused almost entirely on holding Indiana schools accountable using testing data that conveyed grade-level proficiency and college readiness (IDOE, 2015b). The benchmark for A-F accountability success for schools and students was predicated on student performance on high stakes testing. According to former Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Bennett, the A-F grading system was supposed to be a more accurate and transparent picture of school performance when compared to former grading system, P.L.221 (Hiller, DiTommaso, & Plucker, 2012). However, the very narrow goal of student proficiency and college-readiness made the A-F Grading System limiting

for students who qualified under state code for enrollment in Indiana alternative education programs and schools (Johns, personal communication, March 2, 2016).

Although some supported the implementation of the 2011-2012 A-F grading system, there were others who were critical (Grew & Sheldrake, 2013; Grimes, 2013; Hiller et al., 2012). Critiques of the accountability system included: critics of the plan were not given consideration; student improvement was reduced to only bonus points with limited impact on the final grade; and the use of norm-referenced versus criterion referenced exams was not only ill-advised but also illegal under IC 20-31-8-2b (Hiller et al., 2012). There were also allegations that former Superintendent Bennett, or at his direction a member of his staff, manipulated data not in accordance with A-F Grading System expectations to favor specific schools (Grew & Sheldrake, 2013). In February 2013, recurring problems with the A-F grading system prompted the Indiana Legislature to begin to dismantle the grading system. During a meeting on February 21, 2013, Superintendent of Public Instruction Glenda Ritz stated, "While the assigning of grades A, B, C, D, or F should invoke a sense of security and transparency it has instead caused great controversy in our communities" (Grimes, 2013).

On August 2, 2013, the Indiana State Legislature heard testimony from contracted researchers Grew and Sheldrake (2013) about problems with the original form of the A-F accountability. The testimony highlighted seven concerns, including two specific concerns that impacted alternative education programs (Grew & Sheldrake, 2013). The first concern that Grew and Sheldrake revealed was that the A-F rulemaking did not consider the many school configurations that are emblematic of alternative education.

The second concern highlighted in the Grew and Sheldrake (2013) report was the use of growth caps. Growth caps limited the number of points a school could earn in a single year for

improved student performance or the number of points a school could lose in a single year for poor student performance. It insulated high performing schools from falling grades from year-to-year while condemning low performing schools from raising their grade from year-to-year. Grew and Sheldrake noted that subject matter growth caps were either unfairly penalizing high performing schools or hiding mediocrity in others. Both concerns directly impacted the effectiveness of the A-F Grading System. It should be noted that an overhaul of the A-F grading system culminated in a state board of education vote on several rule changes aimed at correcting these issues on April 29, 2015 (ISBOE, 2015).

In IC 20-30-8, the state legislature defined an alternative program and school, defined an alternative student, and identified policy guidelines for acceptance as a state recognized alternative education program or school. Any school corporation or charter school has the lawful right to govern an alternative education program or school and run this program or school on the site of the traditional program or at another location. If a traditional or charter school runs an alternative program the traditional or charter school is held to certain eligibility requirements for the alternative program and given specific waivers to conduct this program:

The eligibility requirements for alternative programs/schools included:

- Instruct students differently than in a traditional school setting.
- Comply with rules governing alternative education programs and schools.
- Comply with admissions requirements of eligible students.

Waivers that were allowed included:

- The length of the instructional day.
- Required curriculum and curricular materials.
- Teacher certification requirements.

- Physical facility requirements. (IC 20-30-8)

The following year the Indiana State Legislature passed the Alternative Education Program Grant (IC 20-20-33-1). This alternative education program or school grant allowed an approved school corporation or charter school to receive up to $750 per student in additional funding in a matching grant. The funds from this grant were intended to supplement basic tuition funding and should target support programs to assist alternative education student progress in credit attainment and graduation. An annual renewal process was required for all participating alternative education programs and schools. Julia Johns, Alternative Education Specialist with the IDOE, stated that the validation of a program or school's effectiveness and continued funding is authorized through the Alternative Education Grant (IC 20-20-33-1) (Johns, personal communication, March 2, 2016).

Johns (2016) stated that the goal of the state's alternative programs and schools is to provide a variety of options for students that lead to graduation. She identified the following characteristics as common to successful alternative programs or schools:

- Maximum teacher/student ratio 1:15
- Small student base
- Clearly stated mission and discipline code
- Caring faculty with continual staff development
- School staff having high expectations for student achievement
- Learning program specific to the student's expectations and learning style
- Total commitment to have each student be a success (Johns, personal communication, March 2, 2016)

Students eligible for alternative education programs and schools must qualify under state guidelines. Students must benefit academically, behaviorally, or both from acceptance into an alternative education program. Any student who would like consideration for participation in an alternative educational opportunity in Indiana must be eligible for enrollment in grades six through 12 and meet the state-defined challenges for alternative students. These challenges will be the basis for a mandatory written individualized service plan (ISP). The student must also meet one of the following defining criteria:

- The student intends to withdraw, or has withdrawn, from school before graduation.
- The student has been identified as a student who has failed to comply academically or would benefit from instruction offered in a manner different from the manner of instruction available in traditional school.
- The student is a parent or expectant parent and is unable to regularly attend the traditional school program.
- The student is employed, and the employment is necessary for the support of the student or the student's immediate family and interferes with part of the student's instructional day.
- The student is a disruptive student.
- The student is currently enrolled in grades six through twelve (Indiana State Legislature, 2005, p.4).

According to Johns (2016), the six criteria listed above were established as a safety net for Indiana students. The state policy makers did not want at-risk students slipping through the cracks, dropping out, or not graduating (personal communication).

Because the focus of this study is exploring effective accountability metrics for Indiana alternative education programs and schools, it was important to hear Ms. John's feedback on the state's use of the A-F accountability system. I asked Ms. John's to assess the state's use of the A-F Grading System as an effective accountability tool for Indiana alternative education programs or schools. Johns stated that the A-F grading system is not used effectively to assess alternative education programs and schools (personal communication, March 2, 2016). She was skeptical about the use of the A-F grading system in its current form stating that it might misrepresent the success of alternative programs and schools with highly specialized missions. In fact, in states like Colorado and Texas that do employ alternative grading metrics, there are improved results for student progress and graduation (Schlessman & Hurtado, 2012).

For accountability purposes, Indiana's alternative education programs and schools are assessed using the A-F Grading System (ISBOE, 2015). Because A-F does not have access to program level data for alternative education programs and is not implemented with flexibility in assessing alternative education schools, Indiana is reliant upon data collected in the Alternative Education report (AL). The AL report, collected in July of each year, drives the Alternative Education Grant renewal process (Johns, 2016). The data collected in the AL report was intended to assess the alternative characteristics of a state program or school but was not necessarily intended to supplant the A-F Grading System as an effective accountability metric.

Information shown in Table 1 outlines the AL report enrollment data collected from 2011-2015 (IDOE, 2015a). Because the descriptive data is part of the AL report, it is necessary for alternative education programs and schools to report but does not give specific information about the eligibility of students to enter the program or information about alternative student

outcomes. This data is informative but does not necessarily offer data critical to assess alternative programs or schools.

Table 1

Indiana Alternative Programs and Schools Demographic Enrollment Data 2011-2015

Demographic	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Total
Ethnicity					
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	69	70	74	68	281
Black	6399	5698	6297	4736	23130
Asian	81	76	100	77	334
Hispanic/ Latino	1940	1891	2228	1851	7910
White	10201	10306	10148	10295	40950
Multi-racial	1052	1073	1222	1177	4524
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	5	10	10	6	31
Total	19747	19124	20079	18210	77160
Gender					
Male	11417	11060	11616	10673	44766
Female	8330	8064	8463	7537	32394
Total	19747	19124	20079	18210	77160
Socio-Economic Status					
Free	11293	11153	11883	10282	44611
Reduced	1296	1138	1212	1112	4758
Paid	5879	5328	5591	5323	22121
Total	18468	17619	18686	16717	71490
Grade					
6	360	452	413	325	1550
7	1786	1536	1857	981	6160
8	2191	2061	2056	1652	7960
9	2521	2431	2759	2432	10143
10	3526	3079	3458	2796	12859
11	3598	3749	3748	4025	15120
12	5765	5816	5788	5999	23368
Total	19747	19124	20079	18210	77160
Special Education					
Special Education	3409	3185	3547	3040	13181
General Education	16338	15939	16532	15170	63979
Total	19747	19124	20079	18210	77160

Information shown in Table 2 outlines the AL report student outcome and eligibility data collected from 2011 to 2015. The enrollment data collected in the "eligibility" category shows students who are eligible to enter an Indiana alternative education program or school (Indiana State Legislature, 2005). The data collected in the "outcome counts" category offer feedback about student performance in Indiana's alternative education programs and schools. The information collected in these two categories is used by the IDOE to determine whether existing alternative education programs and schools have continued eligibility as an alternative program or school (Johns, personal communication, 2016). Tables I and II offer valid individual student data but were not intended to be an effective accountability metric assessing Indiana alternative education programs and schools. They do not include many of the necessary elements of an effective accountability metric such as: grading rubrics, stated expectations for program or school success, and metrics for proficiency and/or growth.

Table 2

Indiana Alternative Programs and Schools Data: Outcome Counts and Student Eligibility

Outcome Counts:	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Total
Deceased		8	15	16	39
High School Diploma	3090	3016	3018	3363	12487
Attained ISP Goals	3403	3367	3967	3765	14502
Made Adequate Progress	5911	4588	4707	4226	19432
No Progress	2836	2775	2867	2294	10772
GED	159	0	0	0	159
Transferred	2874	3668	3799	3221	13562
Dropped Out	962	1033	984	749	3728
Expelled	512	488	496	389	1885
Incarcerated		181	226	187	594
Total	19747	19124	20079	18210	77160
Eligibility					
Plans to Withdraw/Withdrawn	1529	1660	1694	2100	6983
Failed to Comply Academically	11887	11964	12705	9450	46006
Parent or Expectant Parent	947	1129	905	647	3628
Necessary Employment	279	244	308	317	1148
Disruptive	5105	4127	4467	5696	19395
Total	19747	19124	20079	18210	77160

Indiana's implementation of the A-F grading system as a one-size-fits-all accountability metric has been problematic for public schools and does not effectively assess Indiana's alternative education programs and schools. Policymakers at the state level often used the same grading metric for alternative schools as they use for the traditional school model. The emergence of this one-size-fits-all, performance-based accountability system was predictable in the current standards and assessment era of education (Cobb, 2004). The literature review revealed only 22 states with alternative school frameworks for accountability somewhat separate from the state's primary, traditional, education accountability system (Almeida et al., 2010b). Additional research is needed to determine an effective and appropriate accountability systems that meet the unique needs of alternative schools and programs

Lezotte: Effective Schools Research

When investigating accountability metrics to assess Indiana alternative education programs and schools, it is important to consider several factors such as the amount of overlap among the traditional and alternative school models, Indiana's expectations for alternative education programs and schools, and the research on the chosen accountability metrics. By comparing school characteristics of high performing traditional and alternative education models and considering the highly-specialized missions of alternative education programs or schools, common characteristics for successful schools can be developed and effective accountability metrics for alternative education programs and schools better identified (Almeida et al., 2010a). The following paragraphs present research and comparison of common characteristics of successful traditional schools and high performing alternative education programs or schools in Indiana. Then, the final step is to compare this research on common characteristics and Indiana's expectations to an accountability tool that may be more effective in assessing Indiana alternative education programs and schools.

Several national education organizations including the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the Association of School Psychologists (ASP), the School Social Work Association of America (ASSWAA), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) have conducted research on effective alternative education policy. The collaboration of the research conducted by these organizations resulted in similar or identical policy recommendations made to assist national and state policymakers when writing quality public school and alternative education program and school policy (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013). The recommendations to state policymakers identified several policy priorities: "flexible funding

streams, reduced staff-to-student ratios, improved district-level policies based on standards, development of a crisis and emergency preparedness plan, incentive collaboration, and support for the multitier systems of support (MTSS)" (Cowan et al., 2013, p. 1).

The review of the literature shows overlap within traditional school models of common characteristics for school success including: mission, funding, student discipline and high expectations, support services, communication, leadership, and stakeholder/parent engagement (Cowan et al., 2013; Shannon & Bylsma, 2007; Shannon & Bylsma, 2009). The literature review also reveals a similar overlap within alternative school models of common characteristics for alternative program and school success. In addition to the items listed for traditional education, flexible accountability for student performance and a non-traditional education plans were components recommended for alternative programs and schools (Almeida et al., 2010a; NAEA, 2014; Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006).

The comparison between characteristics of successful schools in traditional and alternative education shows some overlap but also clearly shows areas where there is no overlap. This is due largely to the highly-specialized mission of the alternative education program or school (Cobb, 2004). Changes in the teaching philosophy or methodology that are present in the alternative program or school should include student input and is necessary for academic success (Katsiyannis & Williams, 1999). Indiana has developed a similar list of characteristics of success for alternative education programs or schools including:

- Maximum teacher/student ratio of 1:15
- Small Student Base
- Clearly stated mission
- Clearly stated discipline code

- Caring faculty
- Continual professional development
- School staff having high expectations for student achievement
- Learning program that is specific to student's expectations and learning
- Flexible school schedule
- Community involvement and support
- Total commitment to have each student be a success (IDOE, 2017, p. 1)

Table 3 presents a comparison of the research on alternative education, the expectations in Indiana, and the seven Correlates of Lezotte's Effective Schools. This table documents that Lezotte's Correlates are closely aligned with the research on common characteristics of high performaing alternative education programs and schools as well as the expectations in Indiana. Therefore, Lezotte's Correlates should be explored as a potential assessment model in measuring the effectiveness of Indiana alternative education programs and schools.

Table 3

Comparison of Characteristics of Successful Schools Using Alternative School Research, Indiana Expectations for Alternative Education Programs and Schools, and Lezotte's Seven Correlates of Effective Schools

Characteristics of Successful Schools	Research-Alternative schools	IDOE-Expectations	Seven Correlates-Effective Schools
School Mission	x	x	x
Funding	x	x	
Student Discipline	x	x	x
High Expectations for Students	x	x	x
Support Services	x	x	x
Communication	x		x
Collaboration	x		x
Stakeholder/ Parent Engagement	x		x
Professional Development	x	x	x
Flexible Accountability-Student Performance	x		x
Non-Traditional Education Plan/ Opportunity to Learn-Time on Task	x		x
Flexible School Schedule		x	
Small Student Base/ 15:1 Student to Teacher Ratio		x	
Strong Instructional Leadership			x
Consider Individual Needs of Students/Monitoring of Student Progress	x		x

Because there is an alignment between Lezotte's (2011) Correlates of Effective Schools, the research on successful traditional and alternative schools and Indiana expectations for high performing alternative education programs and schools, it is necessary to review the history of the *Effective Schools Movement* and the seven Correlates of Effective Schools.

Effective Schools research began in 1979 when Ronald Edmonds, educational researcher, wrote an article called, *Effective Schools for the Urban Poor.* In this article, Edmonds outlines

characteristics of successful schools. In 1982, Edmonds refined these common characteristics of school success. These common characteristics became known as the Effective Schools Model. The original version of this research was based on the following five characteristics:

- The leadership of the principal notable for substantial attention to the quality of instruction
- A pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus
- An orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and learning
- Teacher behaviors that convey the expectation that all students are expected to obtain at least minimum mastery
- The use of measures of pupil achievement as the basis for program evaluation (Edmonds, 1982, p.1)

Lezotte was an educational researcher who worked with Edmonds on original Effective Schools' research. Based on work he completed with Edmonds, Lezotte continued to research and publish two generations of Correlates of Effective Schools. The first generation of the Correlates of Effective Schools was published in 1991. It contained five characterstics found in schools that were deemed effective. Twenty-years later Lezotte identified and published two additional elements. These seven Correlates of Effective Schools form the basis for his current research (2011). There were fundamental shifts in Lezotte's philosophy from the first to the second generation that included:

> The first element focuses on the staff's beliefs about the students' ability to succeed: the staff believes that all students can and will obtain mastery of the intended curriculum. The second element addresses the staff's sense of efficacy. Sense of efficacy is the belief that one can successfully achieve what one is being asked to do. (2011, p. 40)

These two additional elements identified in his second generation of Correlates of Effective Schools deepened educator knowledge about the characteristics that must be present to better ensure student success (2011).

The four-decades of Effective Schools' research have produced specific school characteristics and processes that promote learning for the students who attend (Lezotte, 2011). These seven Correlates of Effective Schools are:

1. Strong instructional leadership
2. High expectations for success
3. Clear and focused mission
4. Opportunity to learn and time on task
5. Frequent monitoring of student progress
6. Safe and orderly environment
7. Positive home-school relations (Lezotte, 2009)

In 2001, the seven Correlates of Effective Schools were deemed so critical to school success that they were incorporated into the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (USDOE, 2010). As previously discussed, the Correlates of Effective Schools also align with other research of successful characteristics of traditional education, alternative education, and the expectations outlined for Indiana alternative education programs and schools. Since the original identification of the seven Correlates, an instrument has been developed to assess a school or educational program in relationship to the correlates. As with Lezotte's seven Correlates, the corresponding instrument has been widely-used and is highly regarded (Downer, 1989, 1991; Fullan, 1982, 1985; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rutter et al., 1979).

It is important that the assessment of the quality of Indiana alternative education programs and schools be conducted using an effective accountability metric. Using the correlates developed by Lezotte, which are embedded in federal legislation, aligned to state expectations, and research-based, presents an opportunity to gather the perceptions of educators in Indiana's alternative programs and schools about another accountability metric, other than the A-F Grading System. In the following paragraphs, each of Lezotte's Correlates will be discussed individually. This will be followed by a short summary, which will conclude chapter two.

Strong Instructional Leadership

The role of a principal has shifted from a person who manages processes and people to one who serves in several other roles, including instructional leader, resource provider, and chief communicator within the school and with the community as well (Bjork, 1993; Sergiovanni, 2009). A critical responsibility for the principal is that of instructional leader. The principal must be willing to consistently apply characteristics of sound instructional effectiveness (Association for Effective Schools, 1996). To assist in student learning the principal will also provide resources such as books, material, and facilities (Dufour, Dufour, & Eaker, 2005). Sufficient resources are required for school improvement in all successful schools (Dunsworth & Billings, 2009).

The role of school leader as the lone leader has also shifted. Now the role of leadership is dispersed among all school leaders and teachers to better capitalize on the distributed expertise of the group. The principal role has evolved to be the leader among leaders, maintaining a focus on the school mission and creating a community of shared values (Lezotte, 1991). School leaders have four specific roles: (a) provide instructional resources; (b) maintain visibility; (c) ensure effective communication; (d) be an instructional resource (DuFour et al., 2005).

Schools excel when the principal targets instructional improvement by conducting classroom visits and being more visible throughout the school (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). School improvement is directly tied to the principal's ability to work as instructional leaders and to locate and obtain resources (Dunsworth & Billings, 2009). To sustain school improvement over time the principal should not only seek to improve their leadership skills but also develop the leadership skills of the teachers (Dufour, Dufour, & Eaker, 2008).

The primary role of the principal as an instructional leader, according to Lezotte (2011), is to maintain the focus of the staff on teaching and learning. Principals should look to balance their role as manager and instructional leader (Jenkins, 2009). Instructional leadership in alternative education programs or schools can be particularly valuable. They can provide additional instructional strategies and resources to assist teachers struggling to help students who have academic deficiencies.

Climate of High Expectations for Success

According to Lezotte (1991), the research on setting high expectations began with teacher attitudes and beliefs when interacting with students, and it also instructed teachers on how they should initially deliver instruction. High expectations for student success began with a shift in focus from teacher instruction to student learning or student achievement (2011). Later, the research included additional direction for teachers to anticipate student response and prepare additional strategies to support student learning. The responsibility for schools is to provide schoolwide expectations regarding teacher behaviors, offer additional resources and supports, and clearly define the concept of high expectations (1991).

There are three specific steps that schools should follow to successfully increase student expectations:

1. Teacher expectations for students begins with teachers having high expectations for themselves.
2. The school organization will need to be restructured so that the teachers have more access to tools and resources.
3. Schools, as a cultural organization, must embrace the change as institutions that embrace instruction to institutions that embrace learning (Lezotte, 1991, pp. 3-4).

The shift from teacher instruction to student achievement encourages teachers to develop additional strategies to support student learners across the learning spectrum (Dufour, Dufour, & Eaker, 2004). Increasing student achievement occurs when the curriculum offered to students is more rigorous, purposeful, and challenging. By embracing these three steps, the school climate and culture is permanently altered (Zavadsky, 2010).

Schools should strive to become centers for learning for both teachers and students (Jones, 2008). The focus on high expectations also has a great impact on teachers. Teachers play a critical role in the classroom because it is the teacher that establishes instructional strategies and higher level of learning to increase student learning (Dufour et al., 2004). There is a connection between teacher training and growth and student achievement (Jones, 2008). This concept is especially critical in alternative education programs where the students are often academically deficient (IC 20-30-8).

Clear and Focused Mission. A clear and focused mission in an effective school includes a shared school vision of instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability (Association for Effective Schools, 1996). The limitations of human resources, time, and funding make a shared vision of the school mission even more critical. The effective school will not only focus on learning for students but also embrace the necessity of continuing

education for teachers (Lezotte, 1991). The school leader is challenged to keep the mission as a focal point for the staff (Lezotte, 2011). The staff must collectively embrace and be responsible to its mission, vision, and goals (Dufour & Eaker, 1998).

Opportunity to Learn

Opportunity to learn references that students tend to learn the information that they spend most of their time studying and it is important that educators consider how students spend their time during class. There should be a link between the accepted academic objectives and the opportunity to learn those objectives for students. The highest percentage of class time is focused on activities that are whole class, large-group, teacher-directed, or planned learning (Association for Effective Schools, 1996). Lezotte (2011) emphasized the importance of teachers recognizing that students' prior experiences impact their ability and readiness to learn. Considering this fact, teachers determine the material to focus on and must check for student engagement and mastery of material and standards.

This correlate is the most difficult for teachers to support because it works in contradiction to the traditional school model of grouping students by age instead of academic need and the learning model where all students are given the same opportunity to learn (Lezotte, 2011). The development of strategies for students learning in the alternative education program mirrors exactly the concept developed here. Indiana code for alternative education programs requires a school to maintain a 15:1 student ratio, individualize their approach to student learning using the individualized service plan (ISP), and develop a curriculum that is different than the traditional education program (IC 20-20-32).

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

Frequent monitoring of student progress employs a variety of measures to check for mastery and to assist the teacher in developing next steps to improve student performance and the instructional program (Association for effective schools, 1996). Monitoring the progress of each student and the class throughout the process is critical. Used correctly, formative assessments offer feedback on student progress so that teachers better focus the instruction (Lezotte, 2011). Teachers can use the data from these formative assessments to analyze student mastery of material and assess the difficulty of material to improve instructional strategies (Dufour et al., 2008). However, these same researchers do warn against testing students too often. One negative side effect is that teachers may have too much data, which can derail the instructional and learning processes.

Typically, summative assessments are used for accountability while formative assessments are used by teachers to guide instruction (Stiggins, 2005). Although both are important and serve a purpose, the formative assessment provides immediate descriptive feedback for teachers (Lezotte, 1991). Formative assessments assist teachers by establishing goals for individual students or class learning and assist teachers in establishing appropriate timelines (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2010). It is the testing for accountability, or summative assessments, that drives the purpose for this study. It is one reason the A-F Grading may be ineffective for alternative schools or programs. Identifying a narrow band of feedback from summative assessments may not offer the most accurate picture of success for individual students or alternative education programs.

Safe and Orderly Environment

The need for increased safety measures to protect students and staff is driven by a violent history perpetrated in our schools and how that violence has shaped modern expectations for school safety (Sutter, 2009). Safe and orderly environment of schools balances a climate where staff and students feel free to teach and learn and the school is free from threats. The perception should be that the school is friendly but also pursuing its mission in a fashion that is orderly, purposeful, and businesslike (Association for Effective Schools, 1996). The balance of school safety and a climate conducive for teaching and learning is complicated and constantly evolving. Schools must meet a high standard of orderly environment that includes mutual respect for human diversity and acceptance of multiple cultures (Lezotte, 2011).

Creating environments that are free from outside threats while promoting a climate of collaboration and cooperation requires thought and a commitment to change. It is equally difficult to maintain order from internal threats to safety and promote an environment conducive for learning. Maintaining the school environment from internal threats requires adherence to other Correlates of Effective Schools—adherence to the mission, strong instructional goals, developing positive relationship with students and families (Lezotte, 1991). The lack of a positive connection to the sending school creates fight or flight responses and self-esteem issues that eventually become defined in the state code. There is a connection between a student's self-esteem, the choice of the student to interact negatively in the school environment, and the impact that has on the safe and orderly environment of the school (Price, 2008).

Positive Home-School Relation

Positive home-school relation is a partnership between the parent and school where mutual respect is apparent. The parent understands and supports the school mission, and the

school provides the parent with meaningful roles to assist the school. It is very important to consider that most alternative education programs focus on secondary students. During this time of adolescence, parents often decrease their presence in the student's academic life, which allows peer groups the opportunity to provide greater pressure (Price, 2008). This reduced parental role is often understood by the child through the parent by interaction and communication. The idea that parents' influence over their children decreases in secondary school runs contrary to Lezotte's (2011) research that states positive parental influence and support improves student academic outcomes.

Because there is research that connects the role of parent involvement to student success, it is important that the school leader take the lead to facilitate a strong teacher and parent bond (Lezotte, 2011). There are three important components of a strong school and home relationship: effective two-way communication, parent involvement and control of student behavior, and parent involvement and communication with the child (Marzano, 2003). The individualized attention that can develop in alternative programs are a result of the smaller class size (15:1) and the development of the ISP. These concepts align with Lezotte's (2011) Correlate of positive home-school relation.

Summary

Indiana alternative education programs and schools serve at-risk students who fail in their traditional programs. Attending alternative education programs or schools offers these students another chance to succeed in middle or high school and earn a high school diploma (Johns, 2016). When the accountability of alternative education is viewed through a historical lens, it is obvious that there are inconsistencies in legislation and policy development around the US. In 2012, only 22 states and the District of Columbia had developed aspects of alternative education

into their state accountability metric, and nine states held their alternative programs to the same standards as all other schools (Almeida et al., 2010a). To determine best practices, there needs to be additional research into the effectiveness of accountability models for alternative education programs (Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006).

Alternative programs in Indiana, and across the nation, are reducing the dropout rates, but state legislators are struggling to differentiate state accountability frameworks (Cobb, 2004). State accountability frameworks vary greatly in the number of indicators for success, from one indicator in Florida to fifteen indicators in California (Schlessman & Hurtado, 2012). The strength or weakness of policy leadership was highlighted in a 2006 report to the Department of Labor on alternative programs. Some noted weaknesses included the need to create pathways among programs and the need for additional strategies in multi-level classrooms (as cited in Ruzzi & Kramer, 2006, pp. 31-33). If educators and policymakers intend to make school missions more specialized with individualized programming for students, there will be a need for an accountability metric that will be able to consider these changes.

Considering that the number of at-risk students in Indiana continues to rise, it is important to align strong state policy and accountability (Johns, personal communication, March 2, 2016). When selecting an effective accountability metric to assess Indiana alternative education program and school accountability, it is important to consider that we currently do not have an accountability tool specific for the alternative enviromment. The disconnect of the one-size-fits-all A-F Grading System is so glaring that the one person the state has put in charge of alternative programs and schools says the system is not effective and should not be employed in assessing the state's alternative programs and schools (Johns, personal communication, March 2, 2016). A comparison of the successful schools' characteristics revealed in the research,

however, shows great overlap among Indiana's expectations for alternative education and the Lezotte's (2011) Correlates of Effective Schools. For this reason, Lezotte's seven Correlates of Effective Schools are being used in this study.

In Chapter 3, research methods will be presented. Using the research of Lezotte and with the support of the research tool developed at the Effective School Institute, a study will be completed, which investigates the use of Lezotte's (2011) accountability tool in Indiana's alternative programs and schools. In Chapter 4, the results of this surey-based study will be examined. Finally, in Chapter 5 a summary of findings and a conclusion will be discussed.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

Administrators and teachers working in Indiana alternative education programs and schools deserve strong policy development and an effective accountability model. In Indiana, there is one piece of legislation addressing alternative education program and school development and one piece addressing financial support. The Alternative Program for Certain Students (IC 20-30-8) addresses alternative education program and school development. The Alternative Education Program Grant (IC 20-20-33) offers additional state funding for educating at-risk students.

However, there is currently no Indiana legislation that describes a specific accountability system designed for the unique circumstances of alternative progams or schools. Therfore, alternative education accountability in Indiana falls under the A-F Grading System. Questions have circulated among educators, such as myself, who work in Indiana alterantive education programs and schools regarding the appropriatness of the A-F Grading System as an accountability model for altertative education. We wonder if there is another accountability model that may be better suited to our highly-specialized school missions. These speculations form the basis for my study.

This is a survey-based quantitative study completed in Qualtrics that gathers alternative educators' perceptions regarding Indiana's A-F Grading system and Lezotte's seven Correlates as accountability models for their schools or programs. Dr. Lezotte from Effective Schools shared information regarding the reliability and validity information for the Reality Check survey tool (Appendix D). It is a goal of this research study to solicit response from every administrator and teacher working in an Indiana alternative education program or school. According to Creswell, "A survey design provides a quantitative or numerical description of the trends,

attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (Creswell, 2013, p.155). The results from this quantitative study could provide data that will help legislators and educators decide if changes need to occur in the state's current alternative education policy and accountability system. Therefore, the results of this survey will provide empirical data that may inform practice

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of educators in Indiana's alternative education programs and schools regarding school effectiveness using Lezotte's (2011) seven Correlates of Effective Schools. Comparisons of school settings, participants' demographics and perceptions of accountability measures will be conducted. This study will also gather educators' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of using the Indiana A-F Grading System in assessing alternative education programs and schools

Research Questions

Lezotte's seven Correlates of Effective Schools form the conceptual framework for this study. Lezotte's seven Correlates are: safe and orderly environment, climate of high expectations for success, strong instructional leadership, clear and focus mission, opportunity to learn and student time on task, frequent monitoring of student progress, and home-school relations (Lezotte, 2009). In addition, this study gathers educators' perceptions regarding the use of Indiana's A-F Grading System as an accountability model in alternative programs and schools.

There are four research questions that will guide my inquiry:

1. Which of Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools do participants report as evident in Indiana alternative education programs and schools?

2. What similarities or differences exist between the perceptions of participants in different alternative settings (alternative education programs or alternative education schools) regarding the use of the A-F Grading System and Lezotte's Correlates?
3. What similarities or differences exist between the perceptions of participants with different demographics (grade level, position, community size, community type, percentage of students on free/reduced meals) regarding the use of the A-F Grading System and Lezotte's Correlates?
4. What are perceptions of participants regarding Lezotte's Correlates and the Indiana A-F Grading System as measures of accountability for alternative programs or schools?

Research Design

A survey-based quantitative research design facilitates collection and analyses of perceptions of Indiana educators working in alternative eduction programs and schools regarding the effectiveness of the A-F Grading System and of Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools. The data collected for this study will be gathered through an annonymous online survey. Survey design forms the outline for this research project. This approach allows the researcher to generalize to a larger population in Indiana by studying the trends, attitudes, and opinions of a sample population. Components of a survey design include: survey design, population and sample, instrumentation, variables in the study, and data analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2013). This instrument is a cross-sectional survey that will collect data from administrators and teachers who worked in Indiana alternative education programs and schools. The data collected from this survey will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to understand the respondents' feedback on correlates present in their alternative program or school, the perceived strength of present correlates and any relationship to the respondents' demographics.

The study is designed to investigate the peceptions of Indiana alternative program and school educators of the effectiveness of using the A-F Grading System and Lezottes's (2011) Correlates of Effective Schools. After receiving approval from the Ball State University Internal Review Board (Appendix A), a letter of introduction (Appendix B) and the survey (Appendix G) will be sent via email to targeted study participants. The quantitative data collected from this research study will provide critical information about the current 189 Indiana alternative education programs and how they are implementing effective school practices for at-risk students.

Quantitative studies are advantageous because they offer an economy of design and have rapid turnaround in data collection (Creswell, 2013). Using the Internet to collect survey data offers the researchers many advantages that would otherwise not exist. First, it greatly reduces the cost and time of administering a survey in comparison to the U.S Postal Service. Second, it improves the convenience for both the respondents and the researcher. By accessing the survey via email the respondents can quickly fill out the survey with no further action. I sent all potential respondents the link in a single email and have the data automatically collected in a single repository.

Description of the Sample

In Indiana, there are 203 alternative education programs and schools that are recognized by the IDOE under IC 20-30-8 and receive funding for educating at-risk students under IC 20-20-33 (IDOE, 2015b). This survey targeted a non-stratified, random sample of at least one administrator and one teacher assigned to each of the Indiana alternative education programs. Listings and email addresses were obtained from the Alternative Program at the IDOE. Julia Johns, Alternative Education and Literacy Specialist with the IDOE, offered her assistance to

encourage potential participants to complete the survey (Johns, personal communication, March 2, 2016).

Instrumentation

In September 2015, I contacted Effective Schools to ask permission to use Dr. Larry Lezotte's *Effective Schools* survey instrument. I was granted permission and given a two-year license to access a bank of questions based on the seven Correlates of Effective Schools that were assessed as both valid and reliable (Appendix C). Dr. Lezotte from Effective Schools shared information regarding the reliability and validity information for the Reality Check survey tool (Appendix D). Survey respondents used a five-point Likert scale (5 = *strongly agree*, 4 = *agree*, 3 = *do not know*, 2 = *disagree*, 1 = *strongly disagree)*.

The use of the *Effective Schools* survey instrument allowed me to ensure the appropriate questions were being asked. The *Effective Schools* instrument site has drop down windows labeled category, sub-category, language, audience, and level. The category and sub-category empowered me to choose from one of the seven correlates and sub-categories of that correlate. The audience category allowed me to target the appropriate audience: unspecified, any audience, staff, parents, students, and staff and students. The level category provided me the opportunity to choose the appropriate level of questions: unspecified, any audience, high/middle school, and elementary. Alternative education programs in Indiana are middle and high school programs by state definition.

The twenty-nine-question survey (Appendix G) that I developed using the *Effective Schools* instrument bank included five questions about respondent and program or school demographics and twenty-one questions that targeted each of the seven Correlates of Effective Schools. For example, a statement that inquired about the correlate of safe and orderly environment was: "The

atmosphere is conducive to learning. Students who want to learn are rarely interfered with." (Appendix G). At the end of the survey, there were three additional questions targeting the effectiveness of the A-F Grading System in Indiana. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability statistic for all Likert-type scale questions was reported as .875, verifying the high reliability of the survey items.

The survey was written in English, targeted faculty members, and was developed for feedback on middle and high school students. The specific demographic categories included: (a) role of the respondent; (b) grade level of the program or school; (c) alternative program or school as defined by Indiana code (IDOE, 2017); (d) community size in which the program or school resides; (e) the percentage of students enrolled qualifying for free or reduced meals. A complete listing of the survey questions can be found in Appendix G.

Data Collection

The method for data collection was an online survey using Qualtrics. The survey was cross-sectional and launched to all participants on the same day. Collecting data at one time versus longitudinally, or over time, was an advantage in this study (Creswell, 2013). The IDOE Alternative Programs Specialist, Julia Johns, was used to locate the 203 alternative programs targeted for this study, to identify potential respondents, and gather contact information for administrators and teachers. A Ball State University Internal Review Board (IRB) approved the survey instrument and the approved online survey instrument will be disseminated through Qualtrics. As stated previously, Julia Johns, of the IDOE Alternative Programs, agreed to assist in disseminating the survey instrument through Learning Connection in effort to encourage all potential respondents to fill out the survey. The survey link directed respondents to informed consent, which they had to complete before accessing the survey.

The timeline for dissemination of surveys and collection of data was the fall of 2017. The administrators and teacher identified for this study were given two-weeks to respond. At the end of two-weeks, a reminder email with the survey link was sent to administrators and teachers, and one additional week was given. After that period, the response rates were determined, and data was analyzed.

The research was designed to run efficiently to maximize the number of respondants and the accuracy of the information. The cover letter, which included the approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and informed consent was sent to administrators and teachers in the target group to encourage participation. The cover letter explained the importance of the study through an outline that highlighted the importance for all Indiana alternative programs and schools and assured the participants that their identity would remain anonymous.

Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics are used in this study. The data collected was analyzed and reported using descriptive statistics, which providee an overview of the demographics and mean responses of participants. To properly analyze the descriptive data the following information will bewas reported: number of responses per question, mean, standard deviation, and range of scores for the variables (Creswell, 2013). Inferential statistics were employed to explore any relationships among the variables. Qualtrics was used to administer the survey and collect the data, and SPSS was used to perform data analysis.

Using proper techniques to analyze quantitative data was critical to ensure the research stayed aligned with the research questions, and the feedback remained valid and reliable. T-tests were chosen to assess characteristics within correlates, ANOVA, MANOVA, or regression analyses were used to examine relationships among correlates or given multiple variables. The

power of inferential statistics is that a researcher can generalize to a population using results gathered from a sample of that population (Donnelly, 2007). It is important to study the differences in perceptions of the various demographic groups regarding Lezotte's (2007) seven Correlates when applied to the individual education programs.

Limitations of the Study

All methods of research studies, including quantitative studies, have limitations. Researchers attempt to execute quantitative studies from a distance to remain neutral or value-free (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Because the study will be completed from a distance, it may lack the background information offered in an interview or case study. Another limitation of this study may be the overall lack of respondents. A low response rate could negatively impact, and quite possibly limit, the data analysis process and the ability to generalize any of the finding. The final limitation of the study could be my bias towards alternative education programs. I currently work as a president of an organization that runs two alternative education programs and a foundation that raises money to support the mission and vision of those schools. This could lead to bias in developing a survey and collecting and analyzing data. Given the limited scope of bias in a quantitative study and the safeguards in place at Ball State University (chair/committee support, technical support, use of technology), I am confident that this limitation has been addressed to the extent possible.

Summary

The study was conducted during the fall of 2017 using the details outlined in this chapter. Participants were identified from the IDOE website and with assistance from previously identified IDOE personnel. Once participants were identified, they were sent an email of introduction with the survey link embedded in the email. The survey link connected respondents

first to informed consent and then on to the survey if consent was granted. Respondents were asked to complete the survey in a timely manner. All information gathered during the survey is anonymous.

The survey results were evaluated using both descriptive and inferential statistics to investigate educators' perceptions of performance of Indiana alternative education programs. This was accomplished by comparing results of the participant survey using the Correlates of Effective Schools. Considering there were only meta-analysis studies using data on Indiana alternative education programs and no studies were found focusing specifically on the performance of Indiana alternative education programs, this data may be used to establish a baseline. This study also recorded relevant educators' opinions of the current accountability model used for alternative schools and programs (the Indiana A-F Model), as well as their opinions regarding Lezotte's Correlates as a potential accountability model. will detail the description of the study and the results. Chapter five will provide finding, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of educators in Indiana's alternative education programs and schools regarding school effectiveness using Lezotte's (2011) seven Correlates of Effective Schools. The study was developed to compare school settings, participants' demographics, and the perceptions of participants regarding accountability measures. This study was also designed to gather educators' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of using the Indiana A-F Grading System, which is the current accountability model used in Indiana for assessing alternative education programs and schools. The survey instrument can be found in Appendix G. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze results. The focus of this chapter is to offer an overview of the survey participants' responses and describe their perceptions given different demographic information. This chapter will also review the results in alignment with each research question and summarize the data set.

Participant Demographics

The participants in this study were administrators and teachers employed in Indiana's alternantive programs and schools. Information collected from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) showed there were 203 recognized alternative programs or schools operating in the 2017-2018 school year. Continued review of the IDOE information showed there were 144 total administrators supervising and 594 total teachers working in the state's alternative programs and schools that were included in this study. Of the 738 possible respondents, there were 149 that participated in the survey, a response rate of 20.19%. There were 62 administrators and 59 teachers who identified their role. There were 28 respondents who did not identify their role. The breakdown of participants by demographic category can be seen in Table

4, the size of the communities in which the alternative program or school resided will be presented in Table 5, and the free/reduced meal rates of the students who attended the alternative programs or schools presented in Table 6.

Table 4

Participants by Demographic Category

Category	*n*	%
Administrators	62	42
Teachers	59	40
Employed – Alternative Program	80	54
Employed – Alternative Schools	39	26
Employed in Middle School	5	3
Employed in High School	79	53
Employed in Both MS/HS	39	26

Participants, as seen in Table 4, were asked to identify themselves by their position and 42% (n = 62) stated they were administrators, 40% (n = 59) stated they were teachers, and 18% (n = 27) did not identify their role. The next survey item asked participants to describe the type of alternative setting where they were employed. Particpants were provided with a definition of an "alternative education program" and an "alternative education school" within the survey question. Fifty-four percent (n = 80) identified their alternative setting as an alternative program, 26% (n = 39) identified their alternative setting as an alternative school, and 20% (n = 30) did not identify the type of alternative setting. Finally, participants were asked to identify the grade level of the alternative program or school where they were employed. Three percent (n = 5) were employed in a middle school setting only, 53% (n = 79) were employed in a high school setting, 26% (n = 39) were employed in both a middle and high school setting, and 18% (n = 26) did not identify the grade level of the alternative setting where they were employed. Although there was an almost even split between administrators and teacher who responded, most of the respondents were employed in alternative programs at the high school level.

Table 5

Size of the Community where the Alternative Program or School Resides

Category	*n*	%
4,999 or less	16	11
5,000 to 49,999	61	41
50,000 or above	44	30

Table 5 presents the breakdown of the size of the communities where the alternative education programs or schools were located. The size of the community for this study followed these population guidelines: rural = 4,999 or less, suburban = 5,000-49,999, and urban = 50,000 or more (IDOT, 2009). Administrators and teachers who participated in the study indicated that 11% (*n* = 16) of the schools or programs were located in rural settings, 41% (*n* = 61) were located in suburban settings, 30% (*n* = 44) were located in urban settings, and 18% (*n* = 28) did not identify the community size.

Table 6

Free/Reduced Rates of Students who attend the Alternative Program or School

Category	*n*	%
0%-20%	8	5
21%-40%	27	18
41% - 60%	23	15
61% - 80%	35	24
81% - 100%	24	16

Table 6 represents the reported percentages of students who qualified for free or reduced rate meals at participants' schools. Five percent (*n* = 8) of the respondents worked in alternative programs or school with 20% or less free and reduced meal population, 18% (*n* = 27) worked in programs or schools with a rate of between 21% and 40%, and 15% (*n* = 23) reported rates between 41% and 60%. It was found that 24% (*n* = 35) of the respondents worked in alternative programs or schools with a rate of between 61% and 80% and 16 (*n* = 24) reported rates of 81% or above. In addition, 22% (*n* = 32) of the respondents did not identify the free and reduced rate

of the alternative program or school where they were employed. In sum, the majority of the respondents reported working in alternative programs with free and reduced rates between 21% and 100%, and the largest single number of responses fell within the 61% to 80% free and reduced rate category.

Analysis of Quantitative Data

The following is an analysis of the quantitative data based on the first research question, "Which of Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools do participants report as evident in Indiana alternative education programs and schools?" The information will be shared by individual question and then questions combined in order to share data aligned by individual correlates. Table 7 shows the participants' frequency of responses among five Likert-type scale choices: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3= unsure, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. The same table also shows the number of respondents (*n*), standard deviation (*SD)*, and mean *(M)*.

Table 7
Frequency of Likert Responses to Survey Questions of Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools

Survey Questions 7-27

	Strongly Agree	*Agree*	*Unsure*	*Disagree*	*Strongly Disagree*	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Safe and Orderly Envrionment								
The atmosphere is conducive to learning.								
Students who want to learn are rarely interfered with.	45	58	6	2	2	123	4.07	.98
Both students and staff respect individual differences.	49	68	0	6	0	123	4.30	.71
Generally, discipline is not an issue at this school.	24	54	8	31	6	123	3.48	1.20
Climate of High Expectations for Students								
Our school staff communicates the belief that all children can learn.	32	65	18	6	2	123	3.97	.87
The school policies, practices, and behaviors reflect high expectations for all students.	45	65	5	6	1	122	4.21	.80
At-risk students are given additional learning time for priority objectives.	52	52	13	6	0	123	4.22	.83
Strong Instructional Leadership								
The principal always demonstrates a high degree of pride in the school.	89	25	5	1	2	123	4.59	.86
The principal communicates the school mission effectively to all school constituencies.	70	37	8	5	2	123	4.34	.98
The principal demonstrates a belief that children can learn.	85	33	2	1	1	123	4.60	.77
Clear and Focused Mission								
Emphasis is placed on LEARNING as a result of instruction.	45	70	5	3	0	123	4.28	.66
The statement of purpose or mission that exists in this school is the driving force behind all school decisions.	34	56	18	11	3	123	4.34	1.00

Survey Questions 7-27

	Strongly Agree	*Agree*	*Unsure*	*Disagree*	*Strongly Disagree*	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Student learning considerations are the most important criteria used in making decisions.	36	65	12	10	9	123	4.03	.85
Opportunity to Learn/Time on Task								
Administrators and staff enforce a policy of minimum interruptions of teaching time.	37	62	8	2	2	123	3.96	.98
There are frequent formal and informal discussions concerning instruction and student achievement led by the principal. This is a high priority area for the principal.	45	55	11	8	2	123	4.03	1.06
The school has programs for low-achieving students that are centrally supervised, coordinated, and evaluated.	31	58	13	14	3	121	3.78	1.13
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress								
In this school, there is a systematic assessment of student progress.	48	66	5	4	0	123	4.29	.70
Plans for improvement are based upon disaggregated student outcome data, which are analyzed by the staff.	27	62	21	11	1	123	3.81	.96
Student achievement is monitored on a regular basis in our building.	57	62	1	3	0	123	4.41	.64
Home-School Relations								
In this school, parents are directly involved in supporting the school program. Most parents are involved in a home and school support effort that promotes student achievement.	7	26	25	47	17	123	2.64	1.15
Teachers regularly inform parents of their child's educational progress and are specific about areas where improvement is needed.	23	73	10	16	0	123	3.81	.94

Survey Questions 7-27								
	Strongly Agree	*Agree*	*Unsure*	*Disagree*	*Strongly Disagree*	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Teachers are trained to work with parents to help children learn.	9	41	19	47	7	123	2.98	1.12

Note. Likert-type scale: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Unsure, 2=Disagree, and 1=Strongly Disagree

Lezotte's Correlates by Question and Correlate

On my research survey, questions seven through twenty-seven were Likert-type questions on Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools. Table 6 above shows the responses for each individual survey question. In order to triangulate results, three survey questions were included for each of the correlate areas. Table 8, which will be presented at the end of this section, presents these summary results aligned directly with Lezotte's Correlates.

On the three survey questions that formed the first Lezotte's Correlate, which was "safe and orderly school environment," participants' combined mean responses revealed agreement (M = 3.95, SD = 1.04). On the individual survey items for this correlate, the questions regarding an atmosphere conducive for learning (M = 4.07, SD = .98) and students and staff respect individual differences (M = 4.30, SD = .71) showed a higher level of agreement than the question asking if discipline was an issue at school (M = 3.48, SD = 1.20). These data revealed that although the participants perceived their schools as being conducive for learning and respectful, there was less agreement regarding general discipline. Overall, participants' mean responses revealed agreement that their alternative schools and programs provided safe and orderly environments.

Participants' mean responses on the three survey questions that formed the second correlate, which was "a climate of high expectations for success," also showed a level of agreement (M = 4.13, SD = .84). In this correlate, respondents demonstrated consistent feedback

across all three survey questions with 85% responding that their alternative schools or programs developed a climate of high expectations for success.

On the third correlate, which was "strong instructional leadership," participants showed the highest level of agreement ($M = 4.55$, $SD = .78$). The overall strong level of agreement was supported by the three questions that made up this correlate. Questions about "the principal demonstrating a high degree of pride" ($M = 4.59$, $SD = .86$), "the principal communicates the school mission" ($M = 4.34$, $SD = .98$), and "the principal demonstrates a belief all children can learn" ($M = 4.60$, $SD = .77$), consistently provided support that respondents perceived a presence of strong instructional leadership.

On the fourth correlate, which was "a clear and focused mission," respondents continued the trend of agreement ($M = 4.06$, $SD = .86$), although not as high as that seen for strong instructional leadership. The respondents consistently showed agreement when reviewing the individual questions, which were "emphasis placed on learning," "the purpose or mission drive decision-making," and "student learning is the most important consideration." These responses indicated that participants' felt that their alternative programs or schools demonstrated a clear and focused mission.

For the fifth correlate, which was "opportunity to learn and time on task for students," respondents reported agreement ($M = 3.97$, $SD = .99$) that their schools or programs were adhering to this expectation. Two of the three questions in this correlate, "having a policy of minimum interruptions" ($M = 3.96$, $SD = .98$) and "frequent conversations about instruction and student achievement" ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 1.06$), showed a somewhat higher level of agreement than the third question, which was "the school or program has programs for low-achieving students"

(M = 3.78, SD = 1.13). These data revealed that this correlate had a somewhat lower level of agreement among respondents when compared to other correlates.

The sixth correlate, which was "frequent monitoring of student progress," ranked second in mean levels of agreement among respondents (M = 4.18, SD = .79). The respondent's feedback continued to show a consistent level of agreement. These data suggested that the respondent's perceptions were that alternative programs and schools had processes or people that frequently monitored the progress of enrolled students.

The seventh and final correlate was, "home and school relations." The perceptions of the respondents revealed the lowest level of agreement for this correlate (M = 3.16, SD = 1.16), which was in the "unsure" range of the Likert-scale. For the question asking if "parents were directly supporting the school" (M = 2.64, SD = 1.15) and if "the teachers were trained to work with the parents" (M = 2.98, SD = 1.12), there was less agreement than on the third question, which was "teachers regularly inform parents of their student's progress" (M = 3.81, SD = .94). The third question was the only question where the respondents showed agreement. The correlate discussing home-school relations, as well as two of three individual questions that made up this correlate, revealed that respondents were unsure about their alternative program or school's processes in building relationships from the alternative setting to the home setting.

In summary, the first research question looked at Lezotte's Correlates and was "Which of Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools do participants report as evident in Indiana alternative education programs and schools?" Table 8 summarizes these results. In general, participants' mean responses revealed agreement among six of the seven correlates, with "strong instructional leadership," presenting in the strong-agreement range. Nevertheless, for one correlate area, "home-school relations," participants' mean responses fell within the "unsure" range of the

Likert-scale. This raised concerns, in particular related to the topic of "parental involvement," because the parental involvement survey item received the lowest mean response of any question on the Lezotte Correlates. This area of home-school relations will be discussed further in chapter five and explored in relationship to relevant literature regarding alternative settings and home/parental support. In summarizing the results overall, it appeared that the educator participants tended to generally agree or strongly agree that the majority of Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools were present in their alternative programs and schools.

Table 8

Frequency of Likert Responses to Lezotte's Correlates- Crosstabulation

Lezotte's Correlates	*Strongly Agree*	*Agree*	*Unsure*	*Disagree*	*Strongly Disagree*	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Safe & Orderly Environment Total	118	180	14	49	8	369	3.95	1.04
Climate of High Expectations Total	129	182	36	18	3	368	4.13	.84
Strong Instructional Leadership Total	244	95	15	7	5	366	4.55	.78
Clearn & Focused Mission Total	115	191	35	24	3	368	4.06	.86
Opportunity to Learn/Time on Task Total	113	175	32	36	7	363	3.97	.99
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress Total	132	190	27	18	1	368	4.18	.79
Home-School Relations Total	39	140	54	110	24	367	3.16	1.16

Note. Likert-type scale: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Unsure, 2 = Disagree, and 1 = Strongly Disagree

In the next section of this chapter, I will discuss the results of research question number two, which compared the responses of participants in different alternative settings (alternative school or alternative program) regarding Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools.

Perceptions of Participants from Different Alternative Settings

Research question two was, "What similarities or differences exist between the perceptions of participants in different alternative settings (alternative education programs or alternative education schools) regarding the use of Lezotte's Correlates? There was a total of 149 educators who responded to the survey. Of these participants, 80 identified themselves as being employed by an alternative program and 39 identified themselves as being employed by an alternative school. There were 30 respondents who did not answer this survey question. To assist respondents in answering this question, participants were offered the following definition to help them make an accurate choice, "By definition, an alternative program reports student data

through the middle or high school that created the program and an alternative school reports student data as stand-alone data." After collecting these data, the responses of participants on their school or program type were then compared statistically with their Likert scale mean responses regarding Lezotte's seven Correlates. Table 9 presents these results.

Table 9

ANOVA Results - Participants' School Settings and Mean Responses on Lezotte's Correlates and A-F Model

Lezotte's Correlates	*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*p*
Safe and Orderly Environment	108.04	1	108.04	21.61	.000*
Climate of High Expectations for Success	40.2	1	40.2	10.53	.002*
Strong Instructional Leadership	1.09	1	1.09	.26	.608
Clear and Focused Mission	5.85	1	5.85	1.29	.259
Opportunity to Learn & Time on Task	26.00	1	26.00	5.29	.023*
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	.43	1	.43	.13	.720
Home-School Relations	18.62	1	18.62	3.73	.056

Note. *Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

As summarized in Table 9, inferential analyses were conducted using ANOVAs with between-subject effects followed by appropriate post hoc analyzes. Lezotte's Correlates were the dependent variables and alternative settings the independent variables. These analyses revealed three areas of statistical significance at $p < .05$ level between alternative schools and alternative programs. Note, the means used for these analyses are the combined means of the survey questions for each correlate.

The first correlate where respondents reported a significant difference was "safe and orderly environment." Participants from alternative programs reported a higher level of agreement ($M = 12.47$, $SD = 1.92$) regarding the correlate "safe and orderly environment" than did participants from alternative schools ($M = 10.44$, $SD = 2.77$) with a statistically significant difference found ($F(1, 116) = 21.61$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .158$). This significant difference revealed that educator participants from alternative programs, which are typically contained within the

regular school building, reported a higher level of agreement that their programs were safe and orderly, as compared to educators from alternative schools, which are categorized as "stand-alone" schools.

A second area where a statistically significant difference was revealed was in the correlate "a climate of high expectations for success" ($F(1, 117) = 10.53$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .084$). For this correlate, the sum of the means from all three questions from respondents from alternative programs indicated a mean of 12.78 and a standard deviation of 1.79, while participants from alternative schools revealed a lower level of agreement ($M = 11.54$, $SD = 2.25$). This significant difference indicated that educator participants from alternative programs reported a higher-level of agreement that their programs set a climate of high expectations for students as compared to educator participants from alternative schools.

The third area where a statistically significant difference was revealed was for the correlate, "opportunity to learn and time on task." For this correlate, respondents from alternative programs indicated a sum mean of 12.13 and a standard deviation of 2.10 while participants in the alternative school again revealed a lower level of agreement ($M = 11.13$, $SD = 2.44$). A significant difference was found ($F(1, 117) = 5.30$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .044$). This significant difference indicated that educator participants from alternative programs reported a higher level of agreement that their programs established opportunities for students to learn and more time for students to complete tasks as compared to educator participants from alternative schools.

In sum, in all three areas where statistically significant differences were found, the participants in alternative programs showed higher levels of agreement on the Likert scale questions regarding Lezotte's Correlates. These data suggested that respondent's perceptions

were that Indiana alternative programs were performing better than alternative schools in these three areas when using Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools as the accountability tool. These interesting results might imply that alternative programs, which are typically contained within existing middle or high schools, potentially provide more effective settings than stand-alone alternative schools, per the perceptions of the respondents in this study. These results will be discussed in greater detail and in relationship to the literature in Chapter Five.

In the next part of this chapter, I will discuss the results of research question number three, which compared the responses of participants with different demographics regarding the use of Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools. These sections will be broken down by participants' demographics including their grade levels, positions, community sizes, and the percentage of students on free or reduced meals.

Participant Perceptions Impacted by Demographics

The 149 participants who responded to the Qualtrics survey were asked to identify themselves into specific demographic categories. These categories became the independent variables that provided the framework for research question number three, "What similarities or differences exist between the perceptions of participants with different demographics (grade level, position (role), community size, and percentage of free or reduced meals) regarding the use of Lezotte's (2011) Correlates?" In addition to the demographic questions, participants were also asked to respond to three survey questions for the A-F Grading System and three questions for each of Lezotte's seven Correlates. The three questions for each correlate were combined to form individual correlate summed means. These correlate results were shown on Table 8 (frequency of responses, *n*, *M*, and *SD*).

For each of the four demographic areas, correlate means were compared using ANOVA or MANOVA and also a Levene's test of equality of error variances was run. The Levene's test of equality of error variances tests the assumptions of MANOVA and ANOVA that the variances of each variable are equal across the groups. If a significant finding occurs in the Levene's test, this reveals that the assumption has been violated and the results of the MANOVA or ANOVA are not reliable. Therefore, when the Levene's test shows a significant finding in one or more correlate areas for the four independent variables below, it will be noted and any significant results of the ANOVA or MANOVA test in that correlate for the independent variable will not cited as statistically significant.

Grade level

The first independent variable identified in research question number three was the grade level of the alternative program or school where the respondent was employed. The respondents had three choices: middle school, high school, or both middle and high school. Out of the 149 participants 3% (n = 5) responded as middle school, 52% (n = 78) responded as high school, 26% (n = 38) responded as both middle school and high school, and 19% (n = 28) did not identify the grade of the alternative program or school. Table 9 presents the results of inferential analyzes using participants' grade levels as the independent variable and their mean responses on the Likert scale questions regarding Lezotte's Correlates as dependent variables.

Table 10

MANOVA Results - Participants' Grade Level and Mean Responses on Lezotte's Correlates and A-F Model

Lezotte's Correlates	*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*p*
Safe and Orderly Environment	7.88	2	2.94	.68	.510
Climate of High Expectations for Success	6.52	2	3.26	.81	.448
Strong Instructional Leadership	27.54	2	13.77	3.53	.033*
Clear and Focused Mission	1.93	2	.96	.21	.808
Opportunity to Learn & Time on Task	3.13	2	1.57	.30	.742
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	14.34	2	7.17	2.30	.105
Home-School Relations	11.75	2	5.87	1.17	.315

Note. *Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Inferential analysis found no statistically significant differences in any of the correlate areas at the $p < .05$ level. As seen in Table 10, "strong instructional leadership" was noted as significant in the MANOVA test, but because there were only 3% ($n = 5$) respondents who reported from middle school, inferential statistics were not reliable with this group. Also, "strong instructional leadership" was noted as significant during the Levene's test; therefore, the results of the MANOVA test were confirmed as unreliable. In sum, there were no areas of statistical significance found between participants employed at different grade levels in regard to their perceptions of Lezotte's Correlates.

Position

The second independent variable in research question number three was the position (or role) held by the participant working in the alternative program or school. The respondents had two choices: administrator or teacher. Out of the 149 participants 42% ($n = 62$) responded as administrator, 40% ($n = 59$) responded as teacher, and 19% ($n = 28$) did not identify their position. The results of MANOVA analyzes using participants' position as the independent variable and their mean responses on Lezotte's Correlates as dependent variables are summarized in Table 11.

Table 11

MANOVA Results - Participants' Position and Mean Responses on Lezotte's Correlates and A-F Model

Lezotte's Correlates	*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*p*
Safe and Orderly Environment	108.38	1	108.38	22.61	.000*
Climate of High Expectations for Success	12.13	1	12.13	3.56	.062
Strong Instructional Leadership	12.86	1	12.86	3.20	.076
Clear and Focused Mission	21.46	1	21.46	4.98	.028*
Opportunity to Learn & Time on Task	39.99	1	39.99	8.21	.005*
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	1.32	1	1.32	.41	.524
Home-School Relations	2.61	1	2.61	2.61	.474

Note. *Significant at the $p < .05$ level

Inferential analysis uncovered statistically significant differences in three correlate areas at the $p < .05$ level. As seen in Table 11, the three correlate areas were "clear and focused mission," "opportunity to learn and time on task," and "safe and orderly environment." However, this third correlate area, "safe and orderly environment," was deemed not reliable because it was also found to be significant during the Levene's test. Therefore, it was excluded as a significant result.

The first area where respondents reported a significant difference and deemed a reliable result was "clear and focused mission." Administrators reported a higher level of agreement ($M = 12.57$, $SD = 1.82$) that there was a clear and focused mission of the alternative program or school than did teachers ($M = 11.72$, $SD = 2.32$) with a statistically significant difference found ($F(1, 119) = 4.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .041$). This significant difference revealed that administrators reported a higher-level of agreement that their alternative programs or schools had a clear and focused mission as compared to teachers. These results suggested that administrators may be more aware of the alternative program or school mission and there may be a need to communicate this to teachers. This difference and possible implications will be discussed further in chapter five.

The second area where respondents reported a significant difference was "opportunity to learn and time on task." Again, in this area, administrators reported a higher level of agreement (M = 12.25, SD = 1.95) than did teachers (M = 11.09, SD = 2.45) that students in their alternative program or school had the opportunity to learn and time on task. A statistically significant difference was found ($F(1, 119) = 8.21$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .066$). This statistically significant difference indicated that administrators reported a higher level of agreement that their alternative program or school provided students more opportunity to learn and more time to complete tasks as compared to teachers. This difference was interesting, although counterintuitive, considering that teachers, not administrators, are in direct contact with students during classroom time and potentially have a clearer understanding of "time on task" issues. This difference and possible implications will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

Community Size

The third independent variable in research question number three was the community size where the alternative program or school was located. The respondents had three choices of community populations: 4,999 or less, 5,000 to 49,999, or 50,000 or greater. Out of the 149 participants 11% (n = 16) responded as 4,999 or less, 41% (n = 61) responded as 5,000 to 49,999, 30% (n = 44) responded as 50,000 or greater, and 19% (n = 28) did not identify the size of the community. Table 12 presents the results of inferential analyzes between participants' community sizes and their mean responses regarding Lezotte's Correlates.

Table 12

MANOVA Results - Participants' Community Size and Mean Responses on Lezotte's Correlates and A-F Model

Lezotte's Correlates & A-F Grading System	*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*p*
Safe and Orderly Environment	27.82	2	13.91	2.45	.091
Climate of High Expectations for Success	1.53	2	.76	.18	.830
Strong Instructional Leadership	3.47	2	1.74	.43	.652
Clear and Focused Mission	5.21	2	2.60	.59	.555
Opportunity to Learn & Time on Task	6.13	2	3.06	.58	.559
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	8.67	2	4.34	1.43	.243
Home-School Relations	2.93	2	1.47	.28	.755

Note. *Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Inferential statistics analysis found no statistically significant differences in the correlate areas at the $p < .05$ level. In summary, no statistically significant differences were found when comparing respondents from different community sizes mean responses on Lezotte's Correlates.

Percentage of free and reduced lunch

The fourth independent variable in research question number three was the percentage of students qualifying for Indiana's free and reduced meal program attending the respondent's alternative program or school. The respondents had five choices for their alternative school or program's free and reduced percentage: 0% - 20%, 21% - 40%, 41% - 60%, 61% - 80%, or 81% - 100%. Out of the 149 participants, 5% (n = 8) responded as 0% - 20%, 18% (n = 27) responded as 21% - 40%, 15% (n = 23) responded as 41% - 60%, 24% (n = 35) responded as 61% - 80%, 16% (n = 24) responded as 81% - 100%, and 22% (n = 32) did not identify their alternative program or school's free and reduced percentage. Table 12 presents the results of MANOVA analyzes using free and reduced percentages as the independent variable and participants' mean responses on Lezotte's Correlates as dependent variables.

Table 13

MANOVA Results - Participants' Free and Reduced Percentage and Mean Responses on Lezotte's Correlates

Lezotte's Correlates	*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*p*
Safe and Orderly Environment	43.45	4	10.86	2.00	.100
Climate of High Expectations for Success	25.53	4	6.38	1.64	.168
Strong Instructional Leadership	25.17	4	1.55	.19	.192
Clear and Focused Mission	32.77	4	1.94	.11	.109
Opportunity to Learn & Time on Task	37.27	4	1.98	.10	.103
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	34.32	4	8.28	2.85	.027*
Home-School Relations	13.62	4	3.41	.67	.615

Note. *Significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Inferential statistics analysis found a statistically significant difference in one correlate area at the $p < .05$ level results. "frequent monitoring of student progress" was noted as significant in the MANOVA test, but because there were only 5% ($n = 8$) respondents who reported from the 0% - 20% category, the inferential statistics were not found to be reliable with this group (Table 13). Therefore, there were no correlate areas of statistical significance in the category of free and reduced percentages.

In summary, for the third research question, participants' perceptions were analyzed using four independent variables: grade level, position (role), community size, and percentage of free and reduced students as independent variables. The Levene's test of equality of error variances revealed that on three occasions, variables groups were not of comparable size; therefore, the results of the MANOVA test with the following variables were not deemed reliable. With the independent variable of grade level, "strong instructional leadership" was determined to be significant but the Levene's test and a small sample size 3% ($n = 5$) made that test unreliable. Finally, using the independent variable of free and reduced percentage, "frequent monitoring of student progress" was determined to be significant, but a small sample size 5% ($n = 8$) made that test unreliable.

However, there were two areas where statistically significant differences were found when comparing means within the demographic category of position (role) of the participants. For the correlates "clear and focused mission" and "opportunity to learn and time on task," administrators reported significantly higher agreement than did teacher respondents that these correlates were present in their alternative settings. The results may suggest that the experiences, education, or work responsibilities of the educator roles may impact their perceptions. These findings implied more positive attitudes from administrators than teachers in alternative settings regarding these two correlates areas, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

A-F Grading System and Lezotte' Correlates for Accountability

Research question four was, "What are perceptions of participants regarding Lezotte's (2011) Correlates and the Indiana A-F Grading System as measures of accountability for alternative programs or schools?" There were three survey questions (28 - 30) on Qualtrics that specifically targeted research question number four. The information will be shared by the three individual questions. Table 13 shows the participants' frequency of responses among five choices: *SA* = strongly agree (5), *A*= agree (4), *U* = unsure (3), *D* = disagree (2), *SD* = strongly disagree (1), and *NA* = not applicable. The same table also shows the number of respondents, standard deviation, and mean.

Table 14

Frequency of Likert Responses to Survey Questions of the A-F Grading System

Survey Questions 28-30	*Strongly Agree*	*Agree*	*Unsure*	*Disagree*	*Strongly Disagree*	*N*	*M*	*SD*
The Indiana A-F grading system, which is our current accountability system for public schools in Indiana, is an effective accountability system for my alternative program or school.	2	10	14	30	63	123	1.75	1.01
The Indiana A-F grading system is designed with the flexibility to be applied fairly and equitably to schools and with highly specialized missions such as Indiana alternative programs and schools.	2	8	16	35	58	123	1.77	1.01
Lezotte's Correlates, which are questions 7-27 on this survey, would be a more effective accountability system than the A-F Grading System for my alternative program or school.	31	53	34	2	1	123	3.85	.82

Note. Likert-type scale: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Unsure, 2=Disagree, and 1=Strongly Disagree

On this research survey conducted through Qualtrics, questions 28 through 30, were Likert-type questions on "Indiana's A-F Grading System." On the individual questions, there were levels of disagreement or agreement. The first question asked, "Is the A-F Grading System effective for my alternative setting?" These data revealed a level of disagreement (M = 1.75, SD = 1.05) among participants. The second question was, "Does the A-F Grading System have the flexibility to hold accountable schools with highly specialized missions?" The participants' response to the second question continued to show a level of disagreement (M = 1.77, SD = 1.01). The final question asked, "Would Lezotte's correlates be a more effective accountability system than A-F Grading System?" The participants' responses showed a level of agreement on

this question ($M = 3.85$, $SD = .82$). These data suggested that the educators who participated in this study felt that the A-F Grading System was ineffective and lacked the flexibility necessary to properly hold accountable programs and schools with highly specialized missions. Furthermore, if given the choice, participants indicated they would choose another system of accountability, such as Lezotte's Correlates. The mean outcomes of these individual questions and the possible implications are important, as they suggested a lack of support among the alternative educator respondents for Indiana's A-F Grading System, which is the current accountability model required for alternative settings. This accountability concern, implications for practice, and potential recommendations will be discussed in Chapter Five.

In summary, data presented in Chapter Four were collected from a survey-based research study conducted using Qualtrics. One hundred and forty-nine educators employed in Indiana's alternative programs and schools participated in this study. Their participation on the 30-question survey offered feedback that provided insight regarding educators' perceptions on my four research questions.

For research question one, respondents were asked which of Lezotte's Correlates were present in their alternative program or school. Participants' mean responses revealed that the correlate "strong instructional leadership" had the highest level of agreement and the mean was in the "strongly agree" range. The correlate "home-school relations" was found to have the lowest level of agreement and was in the "unsure" range, indicating a potential area of concern. All other correlates were found to have means responses in the "agree" range.

Research question two was analyzed using inferential analyses to compare responses on Lezotte's Correlates between participants in alternative settings versus alternative schools. Results revealed that alternative program participants reported significantly higher means in

three areas: “safe and orderly environment,” “climate of high expectations for success,” and “opportunity to learn and time on task.”

In research question three, inferential analyses were again completed using participants’ responses on Lezotte’s Correlates and four independent variables, which were grade level, position, community size, and the percentage of the student population on free/reduced meals. The only independent variable that showed a statistical significant difference was “position.” With this independent variable, three areas of statistical significance were found between teachers and administrators, with administrators reporting higher levels of agreement than teachers. The three areas were: “clear and focused mission,” “opportunity to learn and time on task,” and “safe and orderly environment.”

Finally, research question four asked respondents their perceptions regarding using the A-F Grading System and Lezotte’s (2011) Correlates of Effective Schools. The participants responded with disagreement when asked if the A-F Grading system was effective or flexible when applied to their alternative programs or schools. In the final question, participants were asked if another accountability system, like Lezotte’s (2011) Correlates, would be more effective, and participants indicated agreement. A summary of these analyses in terms of their implications, conclusions, and items for further research will be discussed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

This study was created to investigate the perceptions of educators employed in Indiana's alternative education programs and schools regarding school effectiveness using Lezotte's (2011) Correlates of Effective Schools. Comparisons of school settings, participants' demographics and perceptions of accountability measures were conducted. This study also gathered educators' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of using the Indiana A-F Grading System in assessing alternative education programs and schools. Previously, there was limited research into Indiana's accountability system for highly specialized education settings and the perceptions of educators working in Indiana alternative education programs and schools. Therefore, this study provides baseline data upon which further research can be conducted.

To complete this research, I gained permission from the Effective Schools Institute to use their *Reality Check Survey Tool (Appendix D)*. I surveyed educators who worked in the 203 Indiana alternative education programs and schools. To successfully answer the research questions upon which this study was developed, I created a set of demographic questions that allowed for comparison of data sets. There were four research questions that guided my inquiry:

1. Which of Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools do participants report as evident in Indiana alternative education programs and schools?
2. What similarities or differences exist between the perceptions of participants in different alternative settings (alternative education programs or alternative education schools) regarding the use of the A-F Grading System and Lezotte's Correlates?
3. What similarities or differences exist between the perceptions of participants with different demographics (grade level, position, community size, program type, percentage

of students on free/reduced meals) regarding the use of the A-F Grading System and Lezotte's Correlates?

4. What are perceptions of participants regarding Lezotte's Correlates and the Indiana A-F Grading System as measures of accountability for alternative programs or schools?

Chapter 5 will offer an analysis of results by each research question focusing on implications, conclusions, and items for further research. Findings of distinctions and limitations will form the basis of the discussion that might be of interest to alternative educators, educational researchers, and policymakers.

Procedure

To complete the collection of research data on the topic of educator perceptions of Lezotte's (2001) Correlates and Indiana's A-F Grading System, a survey was created and sent out electronically using the software platform Qualtrics. The participants in the study were administrators and teachers employed in Indiana's alternative programs and schools. The cover letter, which included the approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and informed consent were sent to administrators and teachers in the target group to encourage participation. The cover letter explained the importance of the study through an outline that highlighted the importance for all Indiana alternative programs and schools and assured participants that their identity would remain anonymous.

The survey was available on Qualtrics for three-weeks. When the survey closed, descriptive and inferential data analyses were conducted using the SPSS program. Information collected from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) showed there were 144 total administrators supervising and 594 total teachers working in the state's 203 alternative programs and schools that were included in this study. Of the 738 possible respondents, there were 149

that participated in the survey, a response rate of 20%. The results from the survey were discussed and placed in various tables in chapter four. Summaries of these results are offered in the next section of Chapter 5.

Summary of Results

Research Question 1. Lezotte's Correlates Evident in Indiana Alternative Settings

My first research question targeted the perceptions of educators regarding which of Lezotte's (2011) Correlates of Effective Schools were present in Indiana alternative education programs and schools. Lezotte (2009) had written that there were multiple reasons why education was facing increasing challenges to provide adequate resources, services, and support for many students. Increases in the population of low-income students and financial support for education either remaining constant or decreasing were cited as two critical reasons (Lezotte, 2009). Lezotte continued in another paper saying, "The Correlates are the means to achieving high and equitable levels of learning" (1996, p. 1). For my first research question, I attempted to determine if Lezotte's Correlates were present in Indiana's alternative settings. Overall, principals and teachers reported that it was their perception that many of Lezotte's Correlates were evident in their alternative programs or schools ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.17$). The following sections offer findings based on individual Lezotte Correlates.

The first correlate was, "safe and orderly environment." My survey data revealed that although the participants perceived their schools as being conducive for learning and respectful, there was less agreement regarding general discipline. The perceptions of educators working in the alternative programs and schools revealed a much lower level of agreement when the questions switched from those discussing the "orderly" environment of the educational setting and asked specifically about "discipline." Students who qualify for enrollment in Indiana

alternative programs or schools meet one, or more, of the five state definitions for at-risk students. Enrollment of an identified at-risk student into an alternative program or school does not necessarily mean the inappropriate behaviors disappear immediately. The time it takes to correct or address these behaviors may be the basis for the difference in participants' feedback on orderly versus disciplined school environments.

According to Cowan and his colleagues (2013), one best practice for supporting a safe and orderly environment is to consider the context of the school and to pay attention to what is appropriate and culturally sensitive to the unique student population. Alternative education students have often not been successful in regular school settings, and in Indiana this is often due to discipline issues or not complying with academic expectations. From 2011 to 2015, of the 77,160 total students educated in Indiana alternative programs or schools, 19,395 (25%) were due to disruptive behavior and 46,006 (60%) were due to a failure to comply academically (IDOE, 2015b). Therefore, it seems likely that alternative education students as a group might be more inclined to engage in inappropriate behaviors than students in the regular school setting. It should be noted that the mean differences in participants' feedback on individual questions within the correlate were the basis for this insight. In general, the combined mean for all three questions that framed the correlate, "safe and orderly environment," showed a level of agreement among participants.

The second correlate was, "climate of high expectations for success." Principals and teachers who responded to the survey were very consistent in their feedback on the academic expectations established for students. There were 368 responses on the three questions that formed the correlate, "climate of high expectations for success." Eighty-five percent of the

respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their alternative program or school had established high expectations.

One practice that promotes a successful learning environment is the integration of learning supports, instruction and school management into a comprehensive and cohesive approach (Cowan et al., 2013). Because students who are at-risk of not graduating high school have highly individualized circumstances that prevent them from engaging in successful school practices, Indiana requires that all alternative programs and schools implement Individualized Service Plans (ISP) for every student (IDOE, 2018a). Through the use of the ISP’s, school administrators and teachers purposefully connect at-risk students to learning supports and instruction that better guarantees a climate of high expectation for success. The use of differentiated instruction and individualized learning supports have been cited as best practices per key educational research (Marzano, 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Tomlinson, 2000). The concept that Indiana has employed research and a practical approach to creating school processes that inform administrators on best practices and student achievement is encouraged.

The third correlate was, “strong instructional leadership.” Educators responding to my survey strongly agreed that, “strong instructional leadership” was present in their alternative settings. Principals and teachers offered a 92% response rate of either “agree” or “strongly agree” to the three questions that formed this correlate. The three questions that formed this correlate centered around the principal’s “pride,” “communication of school mission,” and “belief that student can learn.”

The concept of what constitutes the role of a strong instructional leader has evolved over time from simply a manager to a leader who is multi-leveled, multi-dimensional, and highly

interactive (Bjork, 1993). The evolving role of a school leader is explored more recently by Sergiovanni (2009) when he describes the role of a school leader using more specific constructs like school culture, standards, and building community to multi-leveled, multi-dimensional, and highly interactive. These concepts certainly describe the role of a program or school leader in the highly specialized missions of Indiana alternative programs and schools.

The fourth correlate was, "clear and focused mission." The feedback from respondents revealed that there was overall agreement that this correlate was present in their alternative schools or programs. Of the respondents, 83% either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the three questions making up this correlate. Only 7% of the respondents "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed," and 10% were "unsure." Therefore, the educators who completed this survey believed that their alternative schools or programs had established a mission-driven educational setting. This is important because the concept that a strong and clear mission is essential for school success has been well documented in previous research (Cordeiro & Cunningham, 2013; Fullen, 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). In fact, the Educational Leadership Constituency Council (ELCC), which is the leading national organization promoting principal preparation and effectiveness, outlined the significance of strong and clear mission by making it their very first standard (ELCC, 2011).

The fifth correlate was, "opportunity to learn and time on task." The participants' level of agreement for this correlate dropped in comparison to previous correlate responses. Only 78% of the respondents chose "agree" or "strongly agree" to these three questions. The three questions making up this correlate asked about, "minimizing interruptions to teaching time," "frequent discussions regarding student achievement," and "providing programs for low-achieving students who are centrally supervising, coordinated, and evaluated." Although the

mean response for each question and the sum mean for the correlate showed a level of agreement, the respondent appeared to be slightly less supportive of this correlate. This is concerning because providing ample learning opportunities and protecting time on task have been shown through research to be critical elements in promoting student achievement (Danielson, 2007; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

The sixth correlate was, "frequent monitoring of student progress." The questions that formed this correlate asked about "data-driven decisions," "regularly monitored student achievement," and the "use of systemic assessments." This correlate ranked second in agreement among respondents with 87% either "agreeing" or "strongly agreeing." According to Cobb, policies should promote the school's use of internal and external measures of accountability- both as formative and summative assessments (Cobb, 2004). Other leading researchers, such as Marzano, Waters, and McNulty, (2005) and Rice (2010) have described the importance of frequent and effective monitoring of student progress. Therefore, it was encouraging to learn that the principals and teacher working in Indiana's alternative programs and schools perceived they were doing an excellent job of monitoring student achievement and using data to assist in future decision-making.

The final correlate was, "home-school relations" and it was the only correlate that fell into the "unsure" range. Of the three questions that formed this correlate, the only one that the participants were in agreement on was, "teachers regularly inform parents of student progress." The other two questions, "were teachers trained to work with parents?" and "were parents directly supporting the school?" fell into the "unsure" range. These responses revealed that participants perceived the relationships between school employee and the families of enrolled students to be the weakest area of the correlate. It is unfortunate that this correlate showed the

weakest agreement among participants, as strong relationships between school officials and adults at home provides an important asset that promotes student success (Simonsen & Sugai, 2013). The reasons behind this lower mean may stem from a variety of factors such as a lack parental involvement, poor teacher training, or a lack of understanding by both the home and school stakeholders about the importance of building the home-school relationship for the success of the student (Cordeiro and Cunningham, 2013).

Overall, the respondents' feedback on all seven correlates showed agreement in six of the seven categories. Therefore, the survey results were positive in showing that respondents perceived that Lezotte's Correlates were present in their alternative program or school. These overall results were encouraging as they revealed evidence that Lezotte's Correlates, which align with research-based practices recommended by leading educational researchers (Danielson, 2007; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2009) are being employed in Indiana's alternative schools and programs.

Research Question 2. Alternative Setting Impact on Respondents' Perceptions of Lezotte's Correlates and the A-F Grading System

My second research question identified the similarities or differences that exist between the perceptions of participants in different alternative settings regarding the use of the A-F Grading System and Lezotte's Correlates. The participants identified themselves as 54% employed in alternative programs, 26% employed by alternative schools, and 20% who did not identify their alternative setting. Respondents were offered a definition of each alternative setting in question four of the survey to assist in selecting their response.

When reviewing data on Lezotte's Correlates using the respondents' alternative setting as the independent variable, three areas of statistical significance were revealed. The first area of

statistical significance was the "safe and orderly environment" of the alternative setting. Respondents from alternative programs reported stronger agreement that their environments were safe and orderly than did respondents from alternative schools. The second area of statistical significance was, "climate of high expectations for success." Respondents from alternative programs reported a significantly higher level of agreement that their alternative setting had set expectations for success than did respondents from alternative schools. The third area of statistical significance was, "opportunity to learn and time on task." Again, respondents from alternative programs reported a significantly higher level of agreement that students attending their programs had opportunity to learn and time on task than did respondents from alternative schools.

These three areas where significant differences in perceptions were found may stem from the structural differences of the two alternative settings. Alternative programs are typically contained within a regular school building, while alternative schools are typically stand-alone schools. The fact that alternative programs are usually housed within the physical space of the school that created it may give the alternative staff members more access to administrative or teacher support. Also, the climate and expectations of the traditional school setting may positively impact the alternative program. Furthermore, alternative program students may still have access to certain programs and co-curricular or extra-curricular activities held in the traditional school. In addition to these items that could significantly impact the culture of the alternative program, there may also be less severe student requirements for entry into an alternative program versus an alternative school. However, these potential explanations for the differences in perceptions are speculative and based on the researcher's background and years of experience in alternative education. Because there is no prior research with which to compare

these results, further research on the differences in perspectives of educators in alternative programs versus alternative schools is clearly needed.

Research Question 3. Participant Perceptions Impacted by Demographics

My third research question used the survey data to analyze the similarities or differences that existed between participants with different demographics regarding perceptions of Lezotte's Correlates. Inferential statistical analyses were performed on respondents' feedback on Lezotte's Correlates as the dependent variables and each of the demographic areas were used as independent variables. The following sections will discuss the data and possible explanations for statistically significant findings.

Grade level. Participants had three choices in grade level: middle school, high school, and middle and high school. Because only 3% of the 149 respondents chose middle school as their grade level some data in this area was considered invalid. In sum, no significant differences were found to be reportable. Strong instructional leadership was noted as an area of significance during the MANOVA test, but because of a small sample size in middle school and because this correlate was noted as significant on the Levene's test, the MANOVA test outcome was not considered valid. However, this correlate is still worth mentioning because the importance of strong instructional leadership is well documented in the research (ELCC, 2011; Fullan, 2003; Rice, 2010; Rebore, 2014; Sergiovanni, 2009). In a 2013 report, Cowan et al. noted that effective and safe school efforts begin with a proactive school leader. Strong instructional leadership is one correlate that appeared to be prevalent across many of the statistical analyses performed. It would make sense that the perception of strong leadership is necessary in alternative programs or schools where students have violated at least one-of-five state defined

academic, behavioral, or social expectations that allow student enrollment in the alternative program or school.

Position. Respondents had two choices for position: administrator or teacher. Forty-two percent of the participants chose administrator and 40% chose teacher. There were two areas of statistically significant difference where administrators reported higher mean levels of agreement than did teachers. The first area was "clear and focused mission." Having a higher level of agreement among administrators than teachers in this correlate was not surprising considering it is typically administrators who are primarily responsible for ensuring their programs or schools are mission-centered. Although it is critically important for the teachers to have ownership and be engaged in the school's mission (Cordeiro & Cunninghan, 2013); it is the principal, acting as the instructional leader, that primarily communicates and promotes the school's mission (Lezotte, 1991). Therefore, this finding may be more about the alignment of responsibilities of administrators versus teachers. However, it does raise a question worth considering, which is, "what is the level of engagement of alternative education teachers in their school's unique mission?" This question is one that requires further research and may make an interesting follow-up study.

The second area of statistically significant difference was found with the correlate, "opportunity to learn and time on task." As with the correlate of clear and focused mission, administrators reported higher agreement per their mean responses than did teachers. Again, this could potentially be explained by the nature of the different job responsibilities between administrators and teachers. Developing the master schedule and structure of the school's programs, which impact students' opportunities to learn and time on task, are typically administrative responsibilities; therefore, it is understandable that teachers may rate this area as

significantly different than administrators. Furthermore, providing alternative students with individualized academic plans and flexibility in scheduling have been noted as strengths in many alternative settings (Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006). It is, however, important to not overlook the fact that teachers rated this area lower than administrators as they are the ones in the classrooms working with students. Ensuring that students have ample opportunities to learn and focused time on task have been found to be in direct relationship to teachers and their ability to provide high quality individualized instruction that meets students' needs (Tomlinson, 2000).

Community size. The next independent variable considered was the size of community where the alternative program or school was located. Definitions, based on community population, were developed for urban, suburban, and rural settings. Respondents were categorized as urban (30%), suburban (41%), and rural (11%). However, when inferential analyzes were conducted, the results did not indicate any statistically significant differences between perceptions of respondents in difference communities regarding Lezotte's Correlates. I found these results surprising because of the large differences in the highly specialized missions of alternative programs and schools across the state. In addition, I imagined that different access to wrap-around and support services in urban versus rural settings would result in significant findings. The results of the analysis, however, did not suggest this to be the case.

Free and reduced meals. The final independent variable focused on school rates of free and reduced meals for students. This variable allowed for analysis of respondents' feedback based on socio-economic level of the alternative program or school. Fifty-five percent of the respondents identified their alternative program or school as having a rate of free and reduced meals of at least 40% or higher and 22% did not identify their program or school's rate. This feedback revealed that more than half of the educators worked in alternative settings with a 40%

or above free and reduced meal rates. There was only one area of statistical significance using this independent variable and it was in the area of, "frequent monitoring of student progress." However, because of a low response rate (5%) in one category, the finding was considered not valid.

The same surprise that was expressed in community size was relevant again here. I would have thought that the economic disparity among students who attend alternative programs and schools in less affluent versus more affluent areas would have impacted the perceptions of educators regarding their access to resources. The result of the analysis, however, did not suggest this to be the case. Nevertheless, I viewed the results of these last two sets of analyses in a positive light because they suggested that neither community type or free/reduced meal rates were indicative of respondents' overall positive perceptions regarding the presence of Lezotte's Correlates in their alternative settings.

A-F grading system and Lezotte's Correlates for accountability. My fourth research question inquired about the perceptions of participants regarding Lezotte's Correlates and the Indiana A-F Grading System as measures of accountability for alternative programs or schools. The descriptive analyses showed a clear perception of the respondents (76%) that the A-F Grading System is ineffective and does not provide the flexibility to properly hold accountable alternative programs and schools with highly specialized missions. Alternative educators' perception that the Indiana A-F Grading System of school accountability is ineffective may mirror the general perception of public-school educators in Indiana and was the basis for the 2013 Grew and Sheldrake report to the Indiana State Legislature. In that report, Grew and Sheldrake (2013) noted multiple challenges and flaws to the A-F Grading System. Nevertheless,

the A-F Grading System continues to be "tweaked" and applied to all Indiana public schools, regardless of ongoing challenges and issues (IDOE, 2018b).

On my survey, when participants were asked if Lezotte's Correlates would be a more effective accountability tool for alternative programs and schools with highly specialized missions, the majority of respondents were in agreement (68%) that Lezotte's Correlates would be a better measure. Given the difficult history of the A-F Grading System when applied Indiana's public schools, as outlined in Chapter 2, and the even more difficult task of applying this inflexible accountability system to alternative programs and school with highly specialized missions, it seems reasonable that the participants in this study would respond negatively to the use of the A-F Grading System and positively to the use of another metric, like Lezotte's (2011) Correlates.

Summary of Results

This research study revealed that participants agreed that six out of seven of Lezotte's Correlates were present in their alternative settings. When the Lezotte's results were analyzed individually, respondents reported that the following correlates were evident in their alternative programs or schools: safe and orderly environment, climate of high expectations for success, strong instructional leadership, clear and focused mission, opportunity to learn time on task, and frequent monitoring of student progress. The only correlate respondents were unsure about was, "home-school relations."

When these data on Lezotte's Correlates were analyzed by alternative setting type (school or program), three areas with significance differences were found with respondents in alternative programs reporting higher means in the areas of safe and orderly environment, climate of high expectations for success, and opportunity to learn time on task. When respondent's means on the

Lezotte's Correlates were compared for four demographic variables (grade level, position, community size, and free/reduced meals), only the characteristic of position yielded a significant difference, with administrators reporting higher means than teachers in two areas: clear and focused mission and opportunity to learn/time on task. Finally, respondents reported negative perceptions about the A-F Grading System, agreeing that it lacked flexibility and was ineffective for alternative programs or schools, which have highly specialized missions. However, when asked if Lezotte's Correlates might be a better accountability measure for Indiana's alternative schools and programs, the majority of respondents agreed.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The results of this study generated several implications for educational policy and practice in terms of school accountability. An important implication is that the A-F Grading System might not be the most effective accountability system for alternative programs and schools. The general perception of the educators who participated in this study was that the A-F Grading was not a good choice. Since the original passage of the A-F Grading System as a statewide accountability metric in Indiana for all public schools, the system has received a great deal of criticism as being inflexible and ineffective (Cobb, 2004; Grew & Sheldrake, 2013). The results of my study add another piece of evidence, as seen through the unique perspective of Indiana's alternative educators, to the mounting concerns that the A-F Grading System is not serving Indiana's P-12 schools or students appropriately.

This lack of confidence in the current accountability system should be taken into account by those at the state level who are responsible for developing and monitoring public school accountability policy and practices. To have a school accountability system in place in which educators have little faith can undermine the entire school accountability process. Indiana P-12

public educators, representing all types of school settings, should have a voice in developing or recommending a new system of accountability for schools and programs that can fairly assess school effectiveness and efficiency based on research and best practices.

When developing a new school accountability system, another implication of this study is that consideration should be given to a framework based on Lezotte's Correlates as a possible replacement for the A-F Grading System. A model such as Lezotte's Correlates that is research-based may provide more effective feedback for alternative programs and schools with highly specialized missions. If a new accountability system was based on Lezotte's Correlates, this study would show prior evidence that many educators working in alternative settings have the perception that the correlates are already present. If a system was developed based on Lezotte's Correlates, regulatory agencies and leaders in the alternative programs and schools would need to work purposefully to adjust to the new accountability metric.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. The first limitation was that the study was conducted with only educators working in Indiana alternative programs or schools. The results cannot be generalized to other states because of the limited number of participants and because each state has a specific set of state code and regulatory oversight that guides their alternative settings.

The second limitation of the study was embedded in the response choices offered in question two of the survey. Participants were asked their position in the alternative program or school where they were employed. They were given "administrator" or "teacher" as possible responses. During the survey period, I had an email from one educator who wanted to take the survey but her role was that of school counselor. She asked if she should skip the question or if the survey was not intended for her. On Qualtrics, it showed that 121 of 149 respondents chose

"administrator" or "teacher" and 28 participants did not identify their role. The lack of choices on this survey question allowing for "other positions" may have caused some participants to skip this question and other possible participants to not complete the survey.

Another limitation of this study focuses on some ambiguity around Lezotte's (2011) Correlates that may have impacted survey feedback. The participants were not offered a rubric to align their perceptions to Likert-scale responses or information to ensure common understanding of terminology. It was also noted that for scores on the survey questions where respondents' perceptions were focused on performance of the respondents' role, the scores tended to be higher when compared to respondents' perceptions of other people or processes. As an example, administrators represented the largest group of responders when the independent variable was "position." The data revealed that, "strong instructional leadership' had the strongest agreement (M =4.55, SD = .78) among the correlates when applied to all independent variables. Therefore, self-reporting may have skewed results when respondents were reporting their perceptions regarding areas that fell within their own job responsibilities.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are four recommendations suggested for further research after analyzing the results of this study. The first recommendation begins with the understanding that this study was a baseline study where the participants' feedback was based on their perceptions. It also stems from respondents' perceptions of Lezotte's Correlates and the A-F Grading System in research question four, "What are the perceptions of participants regarding Lezotte's Correlates and the Indiana A-F Grading System as measures of accountability for alternative programs or schools?" Although the study offered some interesting feedback regarding the presence of Lezotte's (2011) Correlates in alternative programs and schools and the preference of participants of using those

correlates versus the current A-F Grading System as an accountability model, further research should be accomplished around an actual alternative accountability model based on Lezotte's (2011) Correlates and the specific deficiencies when using the A-F Grading System in alternative programs or schools with highly specialized missions.

A second recommendation suggested for further research comes from the limitation that participants in this study may have lacked baselines, or rubrics, to align their perceptions to a common understanding of what is meant for each Likert term used on the survey. In addition to developing rubrics, the researcher may also want to develop a common understanding of terminology. Participants who interpret various terminology within the study differently may have impacted their reported perceptions. One approach researchers may use is the comparison of results in this study, where respondents self-reported alternative program or school performance indicators, to data collected by Indiana as common measures of success: graduation rate, credit attainment, attendance, and student discipline.

A third recommendation suggested for further research is focusing on the three significant findings stemming from research question two, "What similarities or differences exist between the perceptions of participants in different alternative settings (alternative education programs or alternative education schools) regarding the use of the A-F Grading System and Lezotte's Correlates?" The areas of statistical significance that need further research are, "safe and orderly environment," "climate of high expectations for success," and "opportunity to learn and time on task." Earlier in Chapter 5, I had expressed an idea that the physical location of the alternative program may offer certain advantages, such as additional administrative or teacher support, access to curricular or extracurricular opportunities, and access to the traditional school programming that may reinforce positive student behavior. Therefore, the influence of the

traditional program on the climate and offerings of the alternative program may account for the differences in the reported perceptions of the respondents. In addition, there is some historical precedence indicating that special education students achieve at a higher level when they attend school in the regular building versus being educated in a separate facility (Roden, Borgemenke, & Holt, 2013). Further research is needed to confirm or reject my ideas for these differences.

The final recommendation suggested for further research stems from the two significant findings in research question three, "What similarities or differences exist between the perceptions of participants with different demographics (grade level, position, community size, program type, percentage of students on free/reduced meals) regarding the use of the A-F Grading System and Lezotte's Correlates?" The only independent variable that has a sufficient *n* size, passed the Levene's test, and showed statistical significance was "position." Using this independent variable, the two areas of statistical significance were, "clear and focused mission" and "opportunity to learn and time on task," with administrators reporting higher agreement than teachers on both. Earlier in Chapter 5, I noted that the responsibilities and experiences of administrators versus teacher and the opportunity for respondents to evaluate themselves versus other stakeholders or processes might account for the disparity in respondents' perceptions. Further research is needed to identify the actual reasons.

Conclusion

This study investigated the perceptions of Indiana's alternative educators regarding the presence of Lezotte's (2011) seven Correlates of Effective Schools in Indiana's alternative settings. This study also explored alternative educators' attitudes about the effectiveness of the Indiana A-F Grading System as an accountability model for their alternative schools or programs. The results of this research could inform conversations about the development of

more effective accountability systems for Indiana's alternative programs and schools with highly specialized missions. Indiana's alternative education policy has established program expectations, defined an alternative education student, and established a grant to offer additional financial resources (Indiana State Legislature, 2005, 2006). The A-F Grading System, however, serves as an inflexible one-size-fits-all approach to school accountability that may not sufficiently account for the definitions or the highly-specialized missions of Indiana alternative education programs and schools (Cobb, 2004; Johns, personal communication, March 2, 2016).

Educators employed in Indiana's alternative education programs and schools have already accepted the difficult responsibility of working with students in grades six through twelve who are at-risk of not graduating high school. I have witnessed the incredible level of commitment it takes to work in this environment and the resulting, "teacher burnout." It seems like a reasonable expectation that Indiana policymakers and educational leaders could develop an accountability system that accounts for the highly specialized missions of these settings.

This study's results contribute important findings that can be added to the literature on accountability system in Indiana's alternative schools and programs. Through this study, I collected data that revealed respondents' perceptions that Lezotte's Correlates are already present in their programs or schools. The only exception was in the area of, "Home school relations." Respondents also agree that an accountability system based on Lezotte's Correlates would provide more flexibility and be more effective than the current A-F Grading System. Respondents indicated disagreement on questions asking if the A-F Grading System offered enough flexibility to be an effective accountability system for their alternative program or school. Respondents were, however, in agreement when asked if Lezotte's (2011) Correlates were appropriate as a basis for an accountability system. These data have important implications

for the future development of school accountability systems for alternative settings, and potentially for other P-12 school settings in the state.

This study also revealed three areas of statistically significant findings when the independent variable of alternative setting was applied to the Lezotte's Correlate data. In each correlate area of, "safe and orderly environment," "climate of high expectations for success," and "opportunity to learn and time on task" alternative programs showed a statistically significant difference when compared to alternative schools. These results certainly left me curious about the quality of programming between alternative programs and alternative schools. It is already difficult to work with students at-risk of not graduating high school. Is there one environment that better supports at-risk student success? This is an important question calling for prompt research and thoughtful deliberation, as every at-risk student needs and deserves to be in the alternative environment most likely to foster success.

The final area where the study showed statistical significance results was when comparing the independent variables "position" with the Lezotte's Correlate responses. For the correlates of, "clear and focused mission" and "opportunity to learn and time on task," administrators were found to have statistically significant higher levels of agreement as compared to teachers. Again, these results left me curious about the differences in perception between two groups of educators who work together on a highly specialized mission. What are the variables that separate the two groups? Are the differences embedded in the limitations of the study or do the differences in job responsibilities, education, or experiences drive the differences in perceptions?

The results of my study are valuable to policymakers and educators. For those who want to have meaningful conversations about establishing realistic expectations and an accountability

system that serves alternative programs and schools, the results of this study will be interesting and informative. For those who wish to build on this study or incorporate the results of this study into their research, I believe this study provides a meaningful baseline.

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APPENDIX A: EMAIL #1: SURVEY EMAIL (INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE)

Dear Alternative Program or School Administrator or Teacher,

I am conducting a study that focuses on the perceptions of alternative program or school administrators and teachers regarding the effectiveness of the A-F Grading System or Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools in Indiana alternative programs and schools. I need your help! Please take a few minutes to complete this quick survey. Your participation is **completely anonymous.** Nothing from this survey will be linked back to you or your school.

As a current leader in an Indiana alternative education program, I know how busy you are. I have tried to make this survey as efficient as possible. It should take less than 15 minutes to complete.

I am seeking your feedback on effective accountability metrics for Indiana alternative programs and school. I will be asking questions about your perceptions of the use of the A-F Grading System and about Lezotte's seven Correlates of Effective Schools.

Please consider participating. This study will provide valuable information that will be used for further research and possibly to support future decisions made by state lawmakers and educators.

Click on the link below to complete the survey by **Friday September 29, 2017.**

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or if I can be of service to you.

Sincerely,
Mike Gustin, Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Leadership
Ball State University, Teachers College
Muncie, IN 47306
Telephone 765-621-0832
mike_gustin@yahoo.com

Follow this link to the Survey:

https://bsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_byeueS8eKmi8M4Z

APPENDIX B: EMAIL #2 SURVEY EMAIL (INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE)

Dear Alternative Program or School Administrator or Teacher,

Last week I emailed you about a study that I am conducting focusing on the perceptions of alternative program or school administrators and teachers regarding the effectiveness of the A-F Grading System or Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools in Indiana alternative programs and schools.

If you have already participated, thank you very much and please ignore this email. If you have not yet participated, please take a few minutes to complete this anonymous survey. I guarantee your anonymity and that nothing related to the survey will be linked back to you or your school.

As a current educator, I know how busy you are. This survey should take less than 10 minutes of your valuable time to complete.

I am seeking your feedback on educator perceptions of the effectiveness of the A-F Grading System or using Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools. I will be asking a few questions about your perceptions of the use of both in your alternative program or school.

Please consider participating. The study will provide valuable information used to further the conversation and research about effective accountability systems for Indiana alternative education programs and schools.

Click on the link below to complete the survey by **Friday September 29, 2017**.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions about this study or if I can be of service to you.

Sincerely,
Mike Gustin, Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Leadership
Ball State University, Teachers College
Muncie, IN 47306
Telephone 765-621-0832
dmgustin@bsu.edu

Follow this link to the Survey:

https://bsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_byeueS8eKmi8M4Z

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF APPROVAL FROM EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

August 23, 2017

Dear Mr. Mike Gustin,

We have received your request to use Dr. Larry Lezotte and Effective Schools' survey instrument, known as Reality Check. We understand the instrument will be used for your doctoral dissertation in alternative education.

We are pleased to inform you that you have been granted permission to use Reality Check.

Dr. Lezotte is interested in reviewing your results when your study is completed. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Kind regards,
Kate Sicher
Kate Sicher
Executive Manager
Effective Schools
kate@effectiveschools.com

APPENDIX D: EMAIL APPROVING EXTENSION OF REALITY CHECK- EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

Hi Mike,

I confirmed your license status in Reality Check. It's not due to expire until 9/30/2017. I just sent an email confirmation from the administration site to **mgustin@optionsined.org**

Please let me know if you continue to have log in issues. Best wishes on your dissertation. We're still very interested in your final submission!

Kind regards,

Kate Sicher
Effective Schools
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Webberville, MI 48892
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APPENDIX E: REALITY CHECK- RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY INFORMATION

Needs Assessment Systems
Issues of Reliability and Validity

As described by Lawrence W. Lezotte

We are frequently asked to address questions regarding the survey items that are included in the Effective Schools Needs Assessment Survey Database. For those who may not be familiar with this database, let me give a brief review. The database contains over 2,000 survey items gathered from a variety of sources. Each item has been coded to reflect the Effective Schools Correlate or Characteristic it best fits. Because of the interdependence of the individual correlates with one another, some of the items could have been coded to a second or even third correlate.

Reliability in the context of a needs assessment means three things:

1. The respondents tend to agree with each other regarding their responses to the same needs assessment item.
2. The respondent's responses to items that are designed to assess the same construct elicit similar responses and patterns of responses.
3. The respondent's responses would remain relatively unchanged if they were asked to complete two copies of the survey a few days apart.

The Effective Schools Needs Assessment Database contains several questions designed to measure the same construct. For example, Question 577 states "High expectations for learning are communicated to parents by school staff." Question 588, "This school does not promote an academic learning climate by establishing high expectations for all students." On a parent survey, it would be reasonable to expect that a parent who answers, "strongly agree" to Question 577 would also answer "disagree" or "strongly disagree" to Question 588, since both questions measure parent perception of the school's attitude toward high expectations for all students. Likewise, that parent would answer "disagree" or "strongly disagree" to Question 609 – "Teachers typically believe that home background factors are the prime determinants of student achievement. The school cannot overcome these factors."

Reliability of a survey is also based upon an enough data. Schools using the Effective Schools Needs Assessment Database are encouraged to choose several survey items to get a stable picture of whatever quality dimension they are trying to measure. In addition, schools are encouraged to ascertain as large a representative sample as practical to ensure that the survey responses come from a broad cross-section of the population they are surveying.

While reliability is a necessary condition for establishing the validity of a measuring tool, it is not sufficient to do so. The definition of validity is deceptively simple: *Does the assessment measure what it claims to measure?* There are two ways to answer this question:

Content Validity: Individuals able to pass judgment say that this item or scale measures what it purports to measure. In the case of a school needs assessment, the school improvement team will

select an item from the database because they believe it has content validity – that it in fact will reflect what they are trying to measure. For example, the school team might select, "Our school has grade-level learning objectives for each subject," because, from their position of expertise, they believe this item will adequately measure the correlate of Clear and Focused Mission. The Effective Schools Needs Assessment Database makes this easier by categorizing the questions by correlate. However, the school improvement team is the final authority on which questions are valid for their purposes.

Concurrent Validity: The responses to a survey item correlate with another measurement tool that purports to measure the same construct. For example, a school needs assessment might include an item that purports to measure instructional leadership in the school. Concurrent validity requires that a second measure of school leadership be administered and the relationship between the two measures be computed. While a school could certainly develop two distinct surveys to ensure the validity of either instrument, few schools have the time or personnel to administer or evaluate two surveys.

If you look at these validity concepts, you'll probably come to agree that content validity is the most important validity index in the context of school needs assessments. If our goal is to have ownership and commitment for change in the school, the leadership group must take steps to be assured that the needs assessment data that is collected is perceived as being valid in the context of that school.

APPENDIX F: SURVEY

Indiana Alternative Education Programs and Schools: Educator Perceptions of Lezotte's Correlates of Effective Schools and the Indiana A-F Grading System .

Survey Questions

Questions 1-6 are demographic questions. The questions have multiple choice answers that are included with each question

Questions 7-27 align with Lezotte's seven Correlates:

1. Safe and Orderly Environment (SOE)
2. Climate of High Expectations for Success (CHES)
3. Strong Instructional Leadership (SIL)
4. Clear and Focused Mission (CFM)
5. Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task (OLTT)
6. Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress (FMSP)
7. Home-School Relations (HSR

According to the response options offered by the Effective Schools Institute's Reality Check, all questions are answered using the following:

Strongly Agree (SA): Numerical value- 1
Agree (A): Numerical value- 2
Unsure (U): Numerical value- 3
Disagree (D): Numerical value- 4
Strongly Disagree (SD): Numerical value- 5
Not Applicable (NA)

Respondents: All questions are either demographic information or your perceptions. The answers to these questions should include your knowledge or perception related to your employment in an Indiana alternative program or school, not to the corporation, high school, or middle that created the program or school. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

1. You must agree to participate to continue this survey.
   I agree, or I do not agree to participate in this study

2. What is your role?
   Administrator or Teacher

3. What is the grade level of the alternative program or school?
   Middle school, High School, or Both

4. Are you employed by a state-defined alternative program or alternative school? (By definition, an alternative program reports student data through the middle or high school that created the program and an alternative school reports student data as stand-alone data.)
   Alternative Program or Alternative School

5. What is the size of the community in which the alternative program or school resides?
   4,999 or less' 5,000 to 49,999; or 50,000 or above

6. What is the percentage of Free/Reduced students that attend the alternative program or school?
   0%-20%, 21%-40%, 41%-60%, 61%-80%, 81%-100%
   Answer questions 6-27 and 29 using these response options:
   Strongly Agree (SA): Numerical value- 1
   Agree (A): Numerical value- 2
   Unsure (U): Numerical value- 3
   Disagree (D): Numerical value- 4
   Strongly Disagree (SD): Numerical value- 5
   Not Applicable (NA)

7. The atmosphere is conducive to learning. Students who want to learn are rarely interfered with. (SOE)

8. Both students and staff respect individual differences. (SOE)

9. Generally, discipline is not an issue at this school. (SOE)

10. Our school staff communicates the belief that all children can learn. (CHES)

11. The school's policies, practices, and behaviors reflect high expectations for all students. (CHES)

12. At-risk students are given additional learning time for priority objectives. (CHES)

13. The principal always demonstrates a high degree of pride in the school. (SIL)

14. The principal communicates the school mission effectively to all school constituencies. (SIL)

15. The principal demonstrates a belief that children can learn. (SIL)

16. Emphasis is placed on LEARNING as a result of instruction. (CFM)

17. The statement of purpose or mission that exists in this school is the driving force behind all school decisions. (CFM)

18. Student learning considerations are the most important criteria used in making decisions. (CFM)

19. Administrators and staff enforce a policy of minimum interruptions of teaching time. (OLTT)

20. There are frequent formal and informal discussions concerning instruction and student achievement led by the principal. This is a high priority area for the principal. (OLTT)

21. The school has programs for low-achieving students that are centrally supervised, coordinated, and evaluated. (OLTT)

22. In this school, there is systematic assessment of student progress. (FMSP)

23. Plans for improvement are based upon disaggregated student outcome data, which are analyzed by the staff. (FMSP)

24. Student achievement is monitored on a regular basis in our building. (FMSP)

25. In this school, parents are directly involved in supporting the school program. Most parents are involved in a home and school support effort that promotes student achievement. (HSR)

26. Teachers regularly inform parents of their child's educational progress and are specific about areas where improvement is needed. (HSR)

27. Teachers are trained to work with parents to help children learn. (HSR)

28. The Indiana A-F Grading System, which is our current accountability for public schools in Indiana, is an effective accountability system for my alternative program or school.

29. The Indiana A-F Grading System is designed with the flexibility to be applied fairly and equitably to schools with highly specialized missions such as Indiana alternative programs and schools.

Research by Lezotte (2011) has identified seven characteristics of effective schools, which include: Instructional Leadership, Clear and Focused Mission, Safe and Orderly Environment, Climate of High Expectations, Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress, Positive Home-School Relations, Opportunity to Learn and Student Time on Task

This survey used Lezotte's Correlates as the basis of questions 7-27. After taking this survey, would Lezotte's Correlates provide a more effective accountability system than the Indiana A-F Grading System for your alternative program or school?

30. Lezotte’s Correlates, which are questions 7-22 on the survey, would be a more effective accountability system than the A-F Grading System for my alternative program or school.